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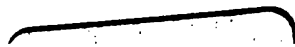
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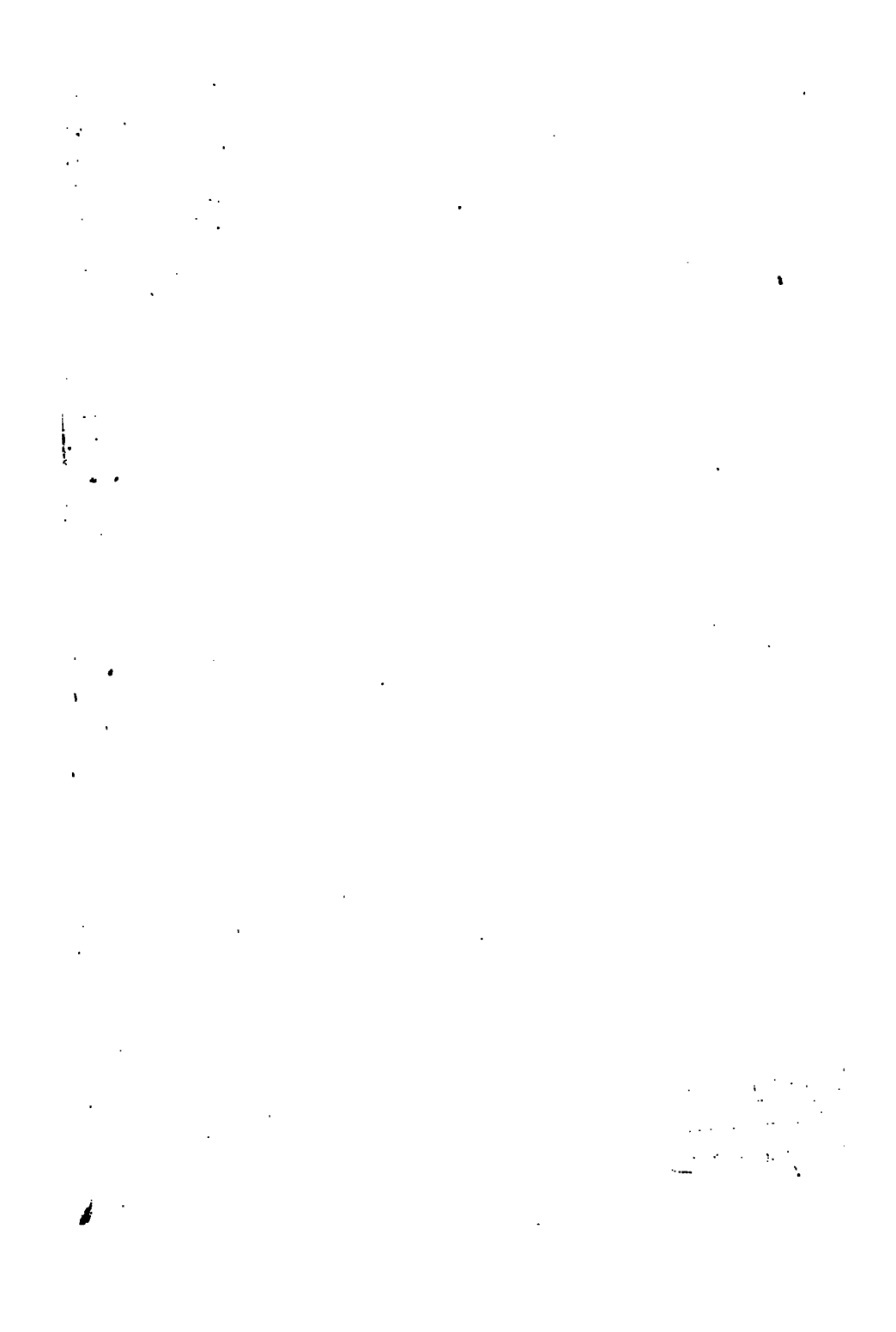
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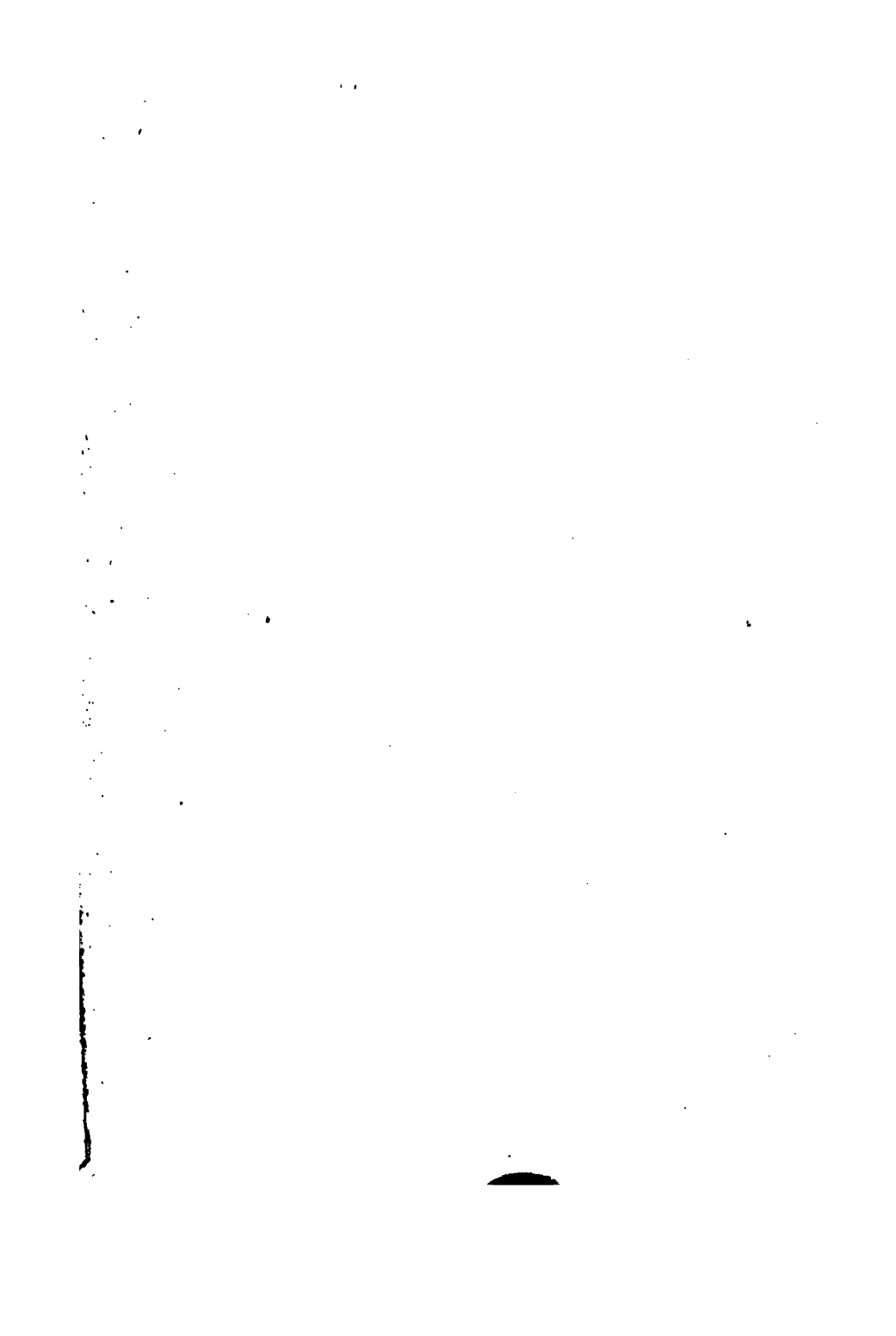


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LESSONS FOR THE DAY

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LESSONS FOR THE DAY

BY

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MONCURE D. CONWAY, L.H.D.

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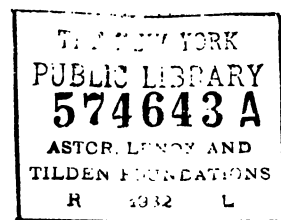
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ROY WEBB
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PREFACE

IN undertaking, at the request of the Rationalist Press Association, to select some of my London lectures for publication, I have found a new significance in Dante Rossetti's mystical picture, "How they met Themselves." Strolling in a lonely wood the lovers meet Themselves: in look and costume the two pairs closely facing each other are so identical that one distinguishes reality from wraith only by the knight's hand seizing the hilt of his sword.

At the age of seventy-five, meeting myself in lectures written at fifty, my hand also flew to the hilt of my steel. But erect Fifty held the arm of stooping Seventy-five, and said, "If one of us must be run through, should it not be you?" In fact, this former London lecturer argued ingeniously that he is my more real self, and that I must sit at his feet rather than he at mine. I had no desire to run through Master Fifty, nor to retract any idea or thought he had expressed in his *Lessons for the Day*, but only to enlarge on one theme or another, to develop several points, and modify some words and phrases which later years have demonetised, so to say. The French republican uses coins of Louis Philippe and of Napoleon III. without liability to any suspicion of being a Monarchist or an Imperialist; but in religious politics one cannot be too

careful in asking, "Whose image and superscription is this?"

My *alter ego* Fifty conceded that my pen should be unsheathed to correct errata, make some sentences clearer, cancel inaccuracies, insert a few dates, and add some explanatory or illustrative footnotes; but there must be no projection of my seventy-five-year self into these *Lessons for the Day*—lessons less given to than received from some of the greatest years of the nineteenth century—and, above all, no shadow of age's clouds must overcast these pages. As just intimated, they are not altogether mine. Important events as they occurred are reflected in them, and the thought and sentiment of many competent and worthy men and women. I have hardly the right, even had I the inclination, to obtrude on those utterances any of the disillusiones that usually beset old men whose past world has turned into a beautiful Utopia.

M. D. C.

September, 1907.

NEW VIEWS OF NATURAL RELIGION

PLEAS for Christianity have for some time shown a tendency to become professional. There have not been wanting able and learned works of this kind, but it has been difficult to read them without finding the "Rev. Dr. This" or "Canon That" of the title running between the lines on every page. Very clever, we say, very ingenious; but we cannot get the gown out of our vision. We rarely expect from clerical statements the whole truth. They who seek truth alone, who hold no brief for any dogma or tradition, have so steadily transferred their talent to the unprescribed channels of philosophy, science, literature, and politics, that a process of denudation has gone on in theology. It has been difficult to point out any important Christian work of modern times not written by one in holy orders. There may be exceptions, but they prove the rule in a generation never surpassed for intellectual activity, and abounding in criticisms on Christianity. There are, indeed, able and eminent Christians who are not clerical; but they are found chiefly in political or professional departments, whose studies are least related to the issues of theological discussion. This ebbing away of genius and learning from the interest that once absorbed them has not been made as much of by opponents of Christianity as the facts warranted, because of a certain arrogance in such an argument.

But the facts are now virtually assumed as a starting-point in the statement which more than any other work of our time vindicates Christianity from the charge of being unable to produce an original mind, or to inspire a searching self-criticism. The volume to which I refer is entitled *Natural Religion*, by the author of "*Ecce Homo*." This author is known to be Professor Seeley, who fills the chair of Modern History in the University of Cambridge. That traces of the cloister may not be found in the book need not be affirmed—the freest thinker is not free from such; but there is nothing perfunctory in the heart of a work which frankly declares that "there is a total want of correspondence between the views of the people and the system under which they live"; that while the artist, the literary man, the scientist have a living religion, "the Christian priest can only be silent; it is the penalty he suffers for having allowed himself to believe that the Eternal, who used in old time to teach man by successive revelations, has long since ceased to do so."

Although this author sees the perils arising from the decay of faith in advance of the reconstitution of religion on a wider basis, he has not written a new book of Lamentations. Instead of a jeremiad, here is an isaiad, so to say—a brave recognition of all the facts and a hopeful dealing with them. His courage shames alike theological and philosophical pessimism, while his moral earnestness rebukes clerical and sceptical complacency.

This is a plea not for orthodoxy nor for heresy, but for reconciliation. "Ah," you say, "another attempt to unite contraries, reason and revelation! Another casuist carrying water on both shoulders!" But

there you are mistaken. Here is a man who believes in science, in freedom, in humanity, even more religiously than the majority of those who reject Christianity; who sees in them the law and prophecy of our age; who would "kiss the son," not to betray him, but in the same good faith that he kisses the father, whose virtues he will not have perish with any form.

The heroism of such a plea for reconciliation may be measured by the moral abyss which sunders the antagonists. On the one side you have the Christian, terror-stricken by the presence of an unbelief which would take from him and his children faith in providence, in immortality, and even in what he believes the basis of morality. On the other side you have the freethinker suffering injustice from that Christian panic; his argument answered by vituperation; his position that of a Lazarus allowed only the crumbs fallen from the Christian table. "Reconciliation!" shouts the Christian; "would you have me love a man who denies my God, turns my pearl of price to ashes, and saps the foundation of Christian order?" "Reconciliation!" cries the freethinker; "how can I come to terms with a man who has his hand at my throat? So long as your God makes my honest thought a statutory offence, takes away my child, refuses me civil rights because I speak my truth, denying is the alternative of hating him. Withdraw thy hand from me, let not thy dread make me afraid, then call and I will answer!"

Although there is more reason in this reply of the freethinker than the Christian admits, although one who rejects Christianity has a special burden to bear, the clutch of dogma is sufficiently relaxed to enable

the negative argument to be uttered. And no considerations of pride or pluck should prevent its being uttered, and the answer heeded even if it is angry. He who questions beliefs vital to others should indeed bear in mind the tremendous revolution he is causing. It is a heavy draft on the feeling, consequently on the patience, of average human nature to demand the surrender, or even the subordination, of beliefs with which its cherished sentiments and visions are intertwined. It can only be done by a good heart under painful necessity for the sake of the sufferer's health, and when that sufferer's struggles cease to be dangerous they should not be resented more than blows dealt in delirium. I do not call supernatural beliefs insane; but the fury of fanaticism against heresy, all attempts to answer argument with penalties, are a kind of madness, none the less when there is method in it. In a rational mind it will inspire compassion for those who know not what they do, and a profound horror of the one thing that turns hearts to stone—Superstition dressed in Authority.

Let us attend to this proposal for bringing harmony into the moral world. I must not try to condense a book already too much condensed, but limit myself to its main principles. According to this view, there is a lower life and a higher life. "This lower life is made up of purely personal cares, and pursues, even in the midst of civilisation, no other object than those which the savage pursues under simpler conditions, self-preservation, personal possession and enjoyment, personal pleasure." The higher life is "the influence which draws men's thoughts away from their personal interests, making them intensely aware of other existences, to which it binds them by strong ties,

sometimes of admiration, sometimes of awe, sometimes of duty, sometimes of love. Under this influence the individual ceases to be a mere individual, and becomes the member of some corporate body, whether city or nation or tribe or Church, and his acts in consequence begin to have a moral character, as being determined by some motive larger than personal interest."

The principle of the Lower Life is what the author designates secularity, as distinguished from religion, which is the principle of the Higher Life. The tendency of the first is to weaken or pervert the great institutions of co-operative life. The tendency of religion is to civilise. But this civilising tendency is liable to arrest and frustration by the corporate societies themselves becoming selfish and discordant with each other. Religions fight. Also, religions decay inwardly through the errors inherited from their infancy. They are mingled with crude primitive notions of the universe, which survive as superstitions. If religion cannot be purified of these errors and superstitions, it intensifies the selfishness and discords of the Lower Life. It alienates the best minds. But the natural agency for eradication of error and superstition is science. This is the removal of false views of nature by true ones. The application of true views of the universe to religion is theology; therefore, science, even as a negative force, is assisting the work of theology, while in spirit it is religious. It is religious, and even prophetic, in its devotion to the spirit above the letter, its contempt of shams and love of truth, and its faithfulness in maintaining individuality and individual conviction against popular notions. Science is claimed as even affirmatively

theological. "That man believes in a God who feels himself in the presence of a Power which is not himself and is immeasurably above himself—a Power in the contemplation of which he is absorbed, in the knowledge of which he finds safety and happiness. And such now is nature to the scientific man." Nay, the scientist studying nature directly realises this Power in its grandeur more than the ordinary theologian, to whom infinity and eternity are very much empty words. He has a real universe where the unscientific theologian has a spurious one. If the scientist does not add to his conception of nature what ordinary worshippers add—Personal Will, Benevolence—that does not make him an atheist. Our author's definition of atheism makes it almost impossible. He says it is mere wilfulness; a childish or barbarian disregard of any law above one's own will. That is a "moral disease," and so atheism may be excluded altogether from our consideration. No man who recognises and respects the laws of nature can be an atheist; it is a mere abuse of the word when he is called or calls himself such. Atheism our author finds more fitly represented by the hypocritical upholders of a dying cause than by the revolutionist who overthrows a conventional deity. There is a noble page on that great truth.

Now if the scientific thinkers have in nature a God, in knowledge of nature a theology, in admiration of nature a worship, in obedience to the laws of nature a morality, in profound realisation of all these in their spirit a religion—why should they and the Christians not unite and co-operate?

The Christian objects because the scientist will not believe in miracles, thereby showing that the nature

he exalts is an impersonal, unconscious, and dreadful Law. But our author answers, Granting that you see more in nature than he does, yet you see what he does ; you recognise God in nature ; to some extent you travel together, and so far you can work harmoniously. But, says the Christian, the thing I most need science refuses to promise me—the immortal life. Our author answers, Nevertheless, religion has other aims besides giving you that faith. It aims to civilise the world, to unite humanity, to moralise society and the homes of men, and bring peace on earth. These are of more importance than your personal comfort in your faith. Your darling doctrines become selfish if they are not subordinated to those large human aims. These do not depend upon supernatural beliefs. Your own Bible shows you how the Hebrew religion bound together a State during ages in which it had no doctrine of a future life. Why may not serious men of different beliefs on other points unite for great moral and human ends on which they agree? But, the Christian urges, he will not join my Church. He will, answers our author, when you make it equally his Church by removing the compulsory creeds which he cannot subscribe, so making the Church a centre of attraction instead of repulsion, of union instead of discord. But then, the other may urge, the scientist rejects Christianity, and I am as organically a Christian as I am an Englishman.

This is the crux. At this point the author turns to the scientific thought of our time to persuade it to be Christian. His eloquent argument is based upon the religious freethinker's own principles. He reminds him that much that is called Christianity is not its religion, but ancient law, as its notions of reward and

punishment, its supernaturalism. Everything travelling through long ages takes on traditional and theoretical vestures from one and another time and place, and, whether these be true or not, they are not necessarily of its substance. There is something more in Christianity than its miracles and dogmas ; something more than its morality—namely, a religious spirit, the gesture of worship, and the worship of a Man. The religious spirit means life and earnestness and enthusiasm, without which morals and opinions become formality, “the letter that killeth”; and the worship of Man means the consecration of ideal humanity, which does away with the sectarian spirit, the selfishness of nationalities, building up a world-wide civilisation as the City of God on earth.

It is no answer to this to say that Christianity was originally founded on faith in the resurrection of Christ. Its historical development has made it quite independent of that. It has been shown to be a vast power—able to build up empires. Why may it not now build up the nobler empire, that of all humanity?

All, then, depends upon the question whether the science and philosophy of our time, the living heart that still beats on the Left, can accept the Christian name. It seems painful enough that so sublime a dream should be at the mercy of a word. But still, in the beginning of every great thing is the Word, and institutions are the incarnation of the reason it represents. Therefore words are not to be tampered with. Our author says : “Such a reform must rest upon the principle that, as Christianity was wider than Judaism, so the religion of the present age must be wider than Christianity ; but, at the same time, as Christianity

did not renounce Judaism, so our religion must not renounce Christianity." But, as a name, Christianity did renounce Judaism. Jesus did not call himself a reformed Pharisee or a rational Essene or a Broad Church Israelite. If he had, we should probably never have heard of him. Many Rabbins of the College at Jerusalem were Broad Synagogue men. No one proposes to renounce Christianity in any other sense than that in which Jesus rejected Judaism. As a great chapter of world-history, as a fruitful part of human experience, no sane man can undervalue Christianity. But, says our author: "While Science says, 'Before we can seriously benefit mankind we must exterminate Christianity,' it breaks the continuity of history, sets men at wild war with their own past, alienates all those who by training and disposition feel most tenderly towards mankind, and surrounds itself exclusively with those whose studies are cold, and in some cases foster a ruthless fanaticism."

Without criticising the ugly word "exterminate," let us remark that all this might be more pertinent if the aim of this grand co-operation were to build up an ideal Christendom. But, by the hypothesis, that is not the aim; it is to build up a universal civilisation of humanity. What is needed, then, is to preserve the continuity, not of Christendom, but of all humanity. Can that be done by asking all non-Christian nations to give up their flags and bow down to ours? As for continuity, so far as it is real, the law of evolution has determined that it cannot be broken; so far as it is national, it is the very thing that the universal religion requires to be merged in the continuity of humanity. Otherwise, your conciliation of

powers—science, literature, art—could secure their free development, and pursue their civilising task, in the national Church, humanity at large could find no fault with that any more than with a national school system. The difficulty begins to be felt when the Church calls itself Christian, and proposes to make the whole world Christian. The moral difficulties in the way of making Christianity an agent of general civilisation I have stated. But, even if that difficulty could be overcome, is it possible that by removing all other creeds except the Christian name the scientific mind of our time could be won into the Church? If a man be called Buddhist or Mohammedan, it surely implies some kind of faith in Buddha and Buddhist scriptures, in Mohammed and the Koran, such as a Christian would regard as sectarian, traditional, unreasonable; and how can a thinker call himself a Christian without warranting a similar interpretation of his position? But the freethinker, scientist, philosopher, of whom we are thinking, does not believe in Christ and the Bible in that sense, however much he may value them. He does not look back eighteen centuries for any lord over the wisdom of to-day. The exaction, too, of the name, as a condition of admission to the Church, would itself be a bar to the scientific intellect, whose breath of life is freedom.

Nevertheless, we must not curse the fig-tree for not giving us fruit before the fig season. Nor should we count for naught this living growth out of a religious heart because it does not answer our particular hunger. The people who share the objections I have stated to the Christian name are very few. No doubt there are larger numbers who oppose Christianity on

other grounds, but would love it if it included the reformers and advanced thinkers, and accepted their modifications. But of those whom the Christian name would exclude from a Church otherwise free the number would be too small to mar a movement like that indicated. Nature does not move by leaps. Let the Church of England heed this prophetic admonition ; let it respond even by substituting "may" for "shall" in the pages of its Prayer Book ; and undoubtedly the alienated intellect of the country would be largely conciliated. I say "alienated," but mean no disparagement. There are already many powerful and good men in the Church—men not only serving the people by self-denying charities, but earnest and scholarly, their national and human feeling outgrowing the letter of their creed on all sides. They are preserving the spiritual endowment of the nation, in which they have only a life interest, from being frittered away on a multitude of hungry sects and secularities by a premature disestablishment, before its rightful heir has reached his majority—the unfettered religion of civilisation. Let the Church only begin the work of adapting itself to the inevitable. Let it make friends with the science and free thought it now so largely affronts, and, in our author's sense, "secularises." The moral genius of the nation would reappear in the pulpit, and a noble spiritual revolution go on which might be depended on to do away gently with every arresting form and phrase, until at last the most irreconcilable would be made friends and the most scrupulous satisfied. It would not be harmful, but rather helpful, to such a spiritual development in the Church, that some should remain outside for a time, refusing to pronounce the Christian

shibboleth that might gain them admission ; they would represent the watch set by non-Christian but religious humanity upon the greatest of Churches to hold it true to its expanding ideal until the last sheath was folded away beneath its flower, fragrant with the heart of the world, beautiful with every tint of the sky.

In such a victory of civilisation not the least triumph would be that of what now bears a sinister accent as "orthodoxy." Had it free course in friendly competition with unorthodoxy, the old system would be transfigured before us, and its Moses and Elias, its ancient law and prophecy, would come from their graves to a new life and career. For in this so-called orthodoxy are stored rich treasures of human experience not to be raised to light so long as that guarded wealth is suspected by freedom and feared by science. Such treasures as learning is freely exhuming from Oriental scriptures and mythologies slumber in the preserve of the Christian priest. Let that spell be broken ! Let that continent of rich ores come forth, pass through the furnace of civilisation, pass through every crucible of criticism, and none will have more reason to rejoice than the priest himself.

Whatever may be our objections to historic Christianity, we cannot fail to see that there are mingled in it elements favourable to a vast evolution in the direction of this final world-wide and human religion. It has, for one thing, a Bible which connects it with Eastern and non-Christian religions. The larger part of the Bible is not of Christian, but of so-called heathen, origin ; the psalmody and prophecy which surround every mind in Christendom with a horizon far wider than its formulas burst from hearts that

knew not these comparatively modern dogmas and creeds, neither their triune deity nor their hope of immortality. Again, by its own legends and traditions, as embodied by art, Christendom is linked on to the Greek and Oriental world. And yet more, in its type of a divine Man giving up his life and going to hell to ransom man from the dark powers of nature, however perverted this type may be by superstitious dogmas, Christendom holds a noble vision which has visited the dreams of many lands. Here is Prometheus crucified on his rock; here is Buddha passing from his palace to be a mendicant under the Bo-tree; here is Krishna pursued by the tyrant Kansa; here are Hasan and Husain, over whose martyrdom the Moslem world still weeps the tears which are counted in Paradise. Who shall foretell what this Christian type of self-devotion may become when it has been made real by the harmonious studies and interpretations of science and religion? The late Dean Stanley reminded the Catholic Church of its tradition that a Pope once signed the warrant for his own execution, so loyal was he to the law of his Church, and the Dean imagined a Pope great enough to sign the death-warrant of the papal office for the welfare of Christendom. But if the Christian Church should ever become free enough to incorporate the thought and virtue now outside it, so far as these could conceivably accept the Christian name, that would be Athanasius signing his own death-warrant for the welfare of his Church. We might then look forward to a grander epoch, when, in view of all the religious discords of the world, the Church of Civilisation would rise at last to the height of the being whose name it has so long worshipped. We might look to

see Christianity itself laying down its life to ransom mankind from the Satan of strife, rising again as the Light of the World, and going forth among the nations as a Good Shepherd, bearing in his arms alike the sheep and the goat, and gently leading them that are with young.

21

PESSIMISM

THE philosophy termed "pessimism" is a sign of our times, and is likely to be felt as a serious one in the next few years. The theories of Schopenhauer and Hartmann have been recently introduced to the English public by an able writer, James Sully, and it is said that the works of those brilliant German essayists are in course of translation. Those of Schopenhauer, especially, will probably make a profound impression. Charles Edwardes has this year (1882) translated some of the works of the Italian pessimist Leopardi. We are therefore summoned to note the entrance into our philosophical firmament of an ominous body, which some declare a new planet, others a baleful meteor. There are as many opinions and prognostications about it as about the comet which every morning shows itself in our southern sky; of which some say it may fall upon the sun, causing heat enough to parch us, while others say it and its fellows may intercept our supplies of sunshine and freeze us. There is a story by Poe which describes the inhabitants of the earth watching day by day, night by night, the approach of a comet destined to strike the world and consume it. The previous effect of the comet, however, was to cause in them "an unusual elasticity of frame and vivacity of mind"; also, "a wild luxuriance of foliage, utterly unknown before, burst out upon every vegetable thing."

There is good reason to hope that, in the case of our philosophical comet, the fancy of Poe will be reversed: that the destruction will come first, and afterwards the vivacity and an outburst of new growths in the earth. For pessimism—the doctrine that all is for the worst—is not a new comet in the sky of thought. It is the doctrine that led Buddha to declare existence an evil, and impelled him to abandon his splendid world and seek an interior unconscious world. It then struck the earth, and, though its first result was to annihilate the existing idols and hopes of man, its next was to awaken new sympathies and clothe the earth with fair humanities. On its next return the pessimist comet struck the sun, so to say. It was absorbed into the godhead of nature, and became the theology of mankind in Europe. Under its fierce reign man surrendered himself to the belief that the earth was under a curse; that the prince of this world was a malignant demon; that the beauties of nature were an infernal growth, destined to be burned by fire, with all who had enjoyed them. Under it man, like Buddha, abandoned his palace, to dwell as in a tomb and contemplate extinction as the chief earthly good. Suicide of every several faculty made the saintly body a living sepulchre. A heaven beyond the grave which confessed earthly life a hell, miraculous new birth which declared natural birth a devil's contrivance, completed that vast system of pessimism.

By a natural law this system itself committed suicide. Monks and nuns do not propagate a race. They who flee the world cannot inherit it. The faith survived only as title-deed to the world conquered by the courage of its despair. The monastic cell swelled

to a cathedral, a palace, inside which the dead faith lay shrivelled like the Egyptian mummy in his splendid tomb, whose preservation seals the inheritance to his successors. The possessions and pleasures of the world became the monopoly of those whose theology declared their emptiness and wickedness. They who maintained that the earth is not accursed nor man depraved became practical examples of a real truth and a verbal mistake. These rational theorists were unable to survive in a society built on their convictions, but endangered by their negations. There was thus a steady evolution of those who could believe in white and call it black, and of a theology which could adapt the human mind to such anomalous environment. It was a hard task for theology; but it had to be done—the interests involved were great—and it called in the strong arm of the State to burn and massacre the logical. Consequently there was for many ages a survival of the inwardly disbelieving and outwardly conforming. By this means the abstract theology became confused with a social order built up in disregard of it, and denial of it confused with immorality.

We need not wonder, then, that traces of the old creed should survive even among thinkers of our liberal time, whose studies do not happen to lie in the direction of philosophy. A notable instance of this has occurred in the case of our Poet Laureate, who, turning from his Muse and undertaking to preach, delivers from the stage a sermon on the immoral results of taking reason for our guide. There have been one or two other instances of the kind in history. About three hundred years ago Marlowe produced his play *Barabas*, to show that misbeliever really

meant miscreant ; that a Jew was not a man but a fiend, his villainies without human motive. Shakespeare answered *Barabas* with Shylock—a Jew in whom Christian vindictiveness is mirrored. In the following century Cyril Turner produced his play *The Atheist*, to show that unbelief is possession by a devil. Like *Barabas*, this “Atheist” commits crimes without visible motive. If the Laureate’s freethinker had been painted about the same time, he might have been a successor to Shylock of Shakespeare’s creation, who appeared at the Globe to prove the unbeliever human, and his wickedness not different from Christian wickedness except in being nobler. But it comes some seven generations too late for that, and now can only be regarded as an instance of the survival of a vulgar superstition in the mind of a poetic artist. From the heights of *In Memoriam*, whose crystal streams have fed so much of the scepticism of our generation, the poet has descended to preach the commonplaces of every conventicle. Dickens’s Rev. Chadband will give you precisely the same view of the terrible moral results of infidelity. Human nature is naturally bad ; other nature and life conspire to bring out the lust, craft, murder, written upon it in invisible ink. This is the old pessimistic theology. But how mere a survival it is in the mind of this scholar and poet is shown at the close of Tennyson’s play, when, just as his audience is awaiting an appropriately commonplace ending—sound orthodox punishment of the sensual villain as he stands beside his dead victim, whose avenger’s hand is at his throat—lo, the scoundrel is forgiven, and leaves the stage without a bruise upon his body ! There the true poet appears,

as he appeared when a worse scoundrel in *Measure for Measure* was pardoned. Tennyson's heart forgets its motley ; it will forgive seventy times seven—

“For all the blessed ones in heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.”

That is not the vulgar view ; that is not commonplace ; it mystified the audience, after so much orthodoxy, and after it had just seen a blind father, on the verge of the grave, cast from him his erring daughter like a Last Day Judge. The poet's heart steps in to make amends by his mercifulness for all this cruelty and ruin. But what is the use of a plea for the moral necessity of faith in a supernatural ruler, which can neither show us a happy world nor punish the demon who wrecks it ? If forgiveness is what is wanted, it is not to be found in the wild play of passions, not in the relentless elements, not in nature-deities that create the desolating forces, then say alike to the evil-doer and the victim, “Depart, accursed” ; but it is to be found alone in the human heart—in Tennyson's heart—whose vision may be blinded by tears, but from which no curse can be wrung even for a devil.

We come now to the production of the pessimist philosopher. In the Wiertz Museum at Brussels there is a famous picture of a beautiful woman gazing intently upon her own skeleton. She might represent the human mind at the task set it by theology. The fair Magdalene in her cave meditating on a skull, the monk in his cell gazing on dead bones, all nature become a tombstone with the cross-bones and death's-head on it : this is the religious history of Christendom for a thousand years. While the soul of man, kneeling in its cavern, so gazed upon the skeleton, as the

one thing real in a world of illusions, thought was invisibly beside it carrying on its own processes. Creeds crumbled around it, churches crumbled, revolutions went on under stern compulsion of earthly necessities ; until at length the intellect began to lay hold of the skeleton itself, began to search into the realities of nature, and gradually drew near to the secrets which lay in these realities. The monk in his cell, gazing on a skull, his faith outgrown, becomes Goethe inspecting that skull till he perceives its vertebration, and announces a pregnant discovery. Science arises, philosophy generalises ; man has returned to search nature with the eyes of veracity. He finds the realities which underlay all those illusions of theology and superstition. This age of science and realism is reflected also in our arts, in our landscape-painting—the one art in which we surpass all earlier times—and in the poetic school of Wordsworth.

But, as one has said, man gets dry and dusty answers when he asks for realities. For while man has become scientific, the long theologic habit which evolved him still lingers. The tremendous issues beyond the grave, which haunted his heart through dark ages, had largely paralysed its interest in human relationships : the nerves could but slowly recover from the effects of that ancient perpetual panic, which had been as if all men were in a burning house, and each concentrated upon his own safety. This went on for ages ; and to the panic was superadded the nightmare notion that the danger was supernatural, such as man had no natural armour to confront. Thus, when the age of abstract liberalism came it found in each man a mountainous Me, raised there by the ages

of pious self-preservation. In perusing the lives of our freethinking fathers, we have occasionally to smile at the extent to which this long-sanctified egoism survives in their freedom, as when Lord Herbert of Cherbury writes a book to prove there can be no supernatural revelation, then believes he has a supernatural sign from heaven telling him to publish it. Thus the old concentration of each man on his own salvation reappears in the excessive individualism which marks the early days of mental emancipation. A notable type of this transitional mind is Byron. While he reviles the sanctities of the past, he measures the universe by his own moods, and judges its tendencies by their pressure on his personal career. If Byron could have survived that wound he received in Greece, when devoting himself for others, there might have been a new song in his mouth. But now his martyrdom contrasts with the pessimism of his poetry.

If a man intellectually separated from the superstitious vision of great surrounding hosts of angels and demons struggling for the possession of the human race is also separated from the real hosts concerned in the struggle for human existence and happiness, what does he become? A scholarly monk, seated in his cavern of individualism, contemplating his own skeleton. In other words, he becomes a pessimistic philosopher. Judged by the limitations of any one man, nature is hopelessly bad, and unhappiness the inevitable lot of every sentient being.

This was the way in which nature and life appeared to Schopenhauer, Byron's personal friend and fellow-traveller. He had no future existence to look forward to; he had no knowledge of the promise which evolution holds for the human race; he had no mirage in

his sky picturing the distant and future earth for his present, but only the mirror of his own personality, in which everything was belittled.

Especially significant is the case of the younger contemporary of Schopenhauer and Byron, Giacomo Leopardi. He was a man of fine culture and genius; he lived thirty-nine years in illness, poverty, and alienation from his relatives; his writings are as beautiful broderies on a funeral pall. Mr. Edwardes' sketch of Leopardi's life, and translations from his works, supply very interesting material for the study of an important phase in the development of philosophy and religion. Leopardi dreaded lest people should attribute his pessimism to his own personal miseries. And to a certain extent that disclaimer should be respected. It were an error to suppose that this sombre philosophy has no other basis than the deranged nerves of Schopenhauer or the hunchback of Leopardi, and his generally forlorn condition. These personal infirmities and sorrows are noticeable as having pulled them down from the heights where their genius might have found compensations for ordinary sorrows; but it was down to a sadly real abyss, where the majority of the human race suffer the same agonies with inarticulate despair. Their sorrows acquainted them with the griefs of mankind. "That," says John Sterling, "which makes our view of the present state of the world a source of perplexity and horror, is the consideration that every human heart bears in itself a type, more or less distinct, of those powers and that happiness which have been the portion of the most exalted minds. There is, perhaps, no spot on earth, however dreary, in which the germs of many plants, and the larvæ of shining

and light-winged insects, are not hidden, though for thousands of years undeveloped, and still expecting the warm breeze that shall call them out in life and beauty."

But these suffering millions are unable to tell their misery or to comprehend it. Some fancy they do not feel it, and are like those spirits Swedenborg heard in hell giving thanks for their bliss. It is a vain fancy. It is contradicted by the drunkenness in which so many seek to forget their misery; by the heaven of humble hopes which attest their hunger and their spiritual starvation; by the ever-agitated waves of popular discontent, sometimes lashed to revolutions that signify despair. Now and then some personal physical infirmity drags down a genius to the normal suffering of the weakest; and then the inarticulate pessimism of the millions, in which every ancient religion is shaped, finds voice and expression in poetry and philosophy.

As already said, the theologic habit of mind survives in all this pessimism, however detached from orthodoxy. Leopardi was born, in 1798, in a small Italian village (Recanati), of a noble but not wealthy family, thoroughly conventional and illiberal. He received classical education, and was at once dedicated to the Church. At the age of twelve he received his first tonsure; and though, while yet in his minority, he came to detest the Church and its creeds, its tonsure was upon him, and he could never escape it. His new heretical thoughts proved to be his martyrdom in youth. Repressed in his home, without a friend in his village, the young scholar found himself prisoned as if in an invisible monastic cell, and vainly tried to escape. When he was twenty-four his father permitted

him to go to Rome, in the hope that he might yet be drawn back into the Church. But he found the Rome of sixty years ago only a larger monastic cell. He had devoted his youth to literary and philosophical studies, until gradually his health was sacrificed and his back hunched, only to find that Rome cared nothing whatever for any thought or learning that was living. In his extremity he longed only for death; he found a friend who recognised his genius and took him into his own home, where Leopardi lived four years, and wrote his brilliant indictments of nature and human destiny. Then he died, and was buried near the grave of Virgil. Over him is a stone bearing the cross of Christ and the owl of Minerva, as is fit enough for one whose wisdom could only see amid the darkness, and whose philosophy could never detach itself from the symbol of humanity sacrificed to the unforgiving law of deified nature.

Leopardi's special arraignment of nature is that, the greater perfection of mind one has, the heavier is its sorrow. Culture only makes a man realise how miserable he is. Truth is the most cruel thing, because it removes the illusions in pursuit of which man might forget his wretchedness. The seeker for truth finds the heaven imagined by his ignorance a fable, glory a bauble; he is like him who discovers one he had loved to be faithless. All excellence is misfortune. The nobler a man becomes, the less can he learn or practise the host of trivial things necessary for easy intercourse with others. The man of high intelligence sees his inferiors perfectly at home in these trivial things that make comparative comfort; and the only compensation nature offers him is that people will praise him after he is dead—indifferent to praise or blame.

How true was all this to Leopardi, whom study brought a hunchback, whom truth brought parental alienation, poverty ; whose refined affections, unanswered, made his torture ! How true equally of multitudes for whom superiority has meant loneliness, poverty, crucifixion ! Heine said, "Where genius is, there is Golgotha." Leopardi rests under the cross. I need not recite his other charges against nature. He pictures an Icelander fleeing from the island where nature freezes and starves him to be in other latitudes sickened, stung, consumed by heat, and finally buried in a mausoleum of sand. He pictures Prometheus taking Momus with him on a visit to the earth to see how grand a creature man is, but witnessing cannibalism, war, sorrow, and suicide. All these evils might find compensation if nature had linked happiness to excellence, and so tended to ennoble the race. But Wisdom and Virtue and Genius have been the martyrs of history. This, the last atrocity, draws from Leopardi, who finds no extenuating circumstances, the capital sentence on nature.

That is just what the old theologies did ; but, in order to sustain the martyrs they required, it was maintained that superiority was repaid in a future world by absolute happiness. That celestial bank having failed for the pessimist, he demands what advantage there is in knowledge or any excellence ? In what is their possessor happier than bird or insect ? If it be replied that these superiorities are in themselves satisfying, that he denies. Of the spring of knowledge man drinks only to thirst again. A man never gets nearer to the end where there is no end. There remains always the question that cannot be answered ; always the desire that cannot be satisfied.

But all these high philosophic arguments are strung on the same old thread as the question—What shall I do to be saved? Once let the centripetal thought turn centrifugal; once let a man remember Copernicus, and cease to regard nature as revolving around himself; once let his heart bound with the cry, What shall I do to save?—and lo, these pessimistic phantoms disappear. They did disappear when man gained the belief that he might be instrumental in rescuing his fellow from eternal misery and raising him to eternal happiness. They are unknown where that faith still exists: there is no pessimism in the triumphal hymns of the Salvation Army. These phantoms have reappeared in the world only where that faith has fled, and thought finds itself in a world of miseries for which it sorrows without hope.

Yes, they have reappeared; but it is to be confronted by a genius of light more potent than their darkness—namely, the discovered law of human evolution. Schopenhauer and Leopardi wrote before this latter-day gospel brought to the world its glad tidings. The secret of creation now lies on man's lips, and every day empowers more and more his heart and his hand. The supernatural Satans and Fates, before which the heart of man lost courage, have all come out of their clouds, and are merged in nature's brutal law—survival of the strongest. The gods and goddesses have likewise come out of their clouds, to be merged in the human spirit which would secure survival of the fittest—the fittest morally and humanly. This human-hearted being was only a tiny good fairy, redressing wrongs here and there, until he learned the art by which brute nature created its world; but now he has gained the weapon of a

god, and his eye can see that all the hydra heads have one neck. This one neck is the infrahuman tendency in nature, so to say, to develop force and organisation without deference to moral needs and human standards. Man's new discovery is that he can control these non-human tendencies and direct their power, enhanced by his reason, to purely human ends. An immediate human end is to arrest the development of everything not useful to man. Man's divine weapon does not descend upon his hydra, because it is not yet "lifted up" in his wilderness; and it is not lifted up because the heartless powers of nature still have their awe-stricken worshippers and their altars among men. The human religion, aiming only at human service, is yet a babe in its manger amid beasts of the stall. Nevertheless, it is much that this babe is born, and that the hymn of goodwill to men is heard in the world. For this birth proves that nature, whatever her hydra ferocities, is quite willing that her man-child shall subdue them all and reign over the earth. It could only have been through good nature that the unconscious selections of the world have improved the human race rather than its enemies. It was a fatal mistake of the pessimists that they did not perceive this. Knowing nothing of evolution, they accepted the legend that men were once stronger, but have been enfeebled by civilisation. Leopardi builds on this error. The measurements of wild tribes have been made and compared with those of the civilised, and the most vigorous people physically have been found in the centres of civilisation and culture. The youths of Harvard University have been scientifically compared with the youths of the most powerful red men, and are found to surpass them

physically in every respect. And this is an answer to those recent apprehensions that the growth in civilisation of the compassion and skill which prolong the lives of the weak, aged, and unhealthy, tends to deteriorate the race. The reverse is the case. The moral factors of improvement are paramount; culture of affections, emotions, sympathies, while prolonging feeble individuals, makes the more compact and co-operative society, in which there may be produced and diffused the knowledge and self-restraint and sentiment which prevent the propagation of feebleness. Impulse becomes subordinate to reason; passions are harmonised with the standard of health, which becomes the standard of beauty; and the science gained by healing the sick becomes a common fund for the preservation of health.

When we contemplate how much has been done towards the humanisation of the earth by the unconscious favours of nature, we have the best foundation for the new hopes raised by the discovery of the method of nature. We now enter on an era of conscious and purposed selection, and, however much impeded it may be for a time by lingering superstitions and traditional institutions, there can be no rational doubt that the undivided reign of man will be able to extirpate from organic nature everything hostile to man. This does not justify any theory of a personal omnipotence worthy of worship, for man cannot worship a power that produced pain as he worships the power that relieves it, and skilfully educes good from it. Nor does the hope founded on evolution justify optimism—the theory that all is for the best—for some things make for evil only, and no evils make for good save by man's art.

But now poor Leopardi comes, with his hunchback and his loveless life, and asks : "What is all that to me ; and what is it to the millions of miserable ones whose lives of torture find their only solace in the approach of death ?" My answer is that if Leopardi had only known and realised how soon man would discover the secret of improving his lot, and how swiftly it would be applied, he would have forgotten his spine and his griefs ; his eyes would have been absorbed in something outside of himself ; his imagination would have created for him a beautiful world, image of the perfect world, and in this inwardly realised city with foundations he would have dwelt amid the harmonies that soothe pain. And this he would realise by the opportunity presented of doing something, were it but writing a song instead of a dirge, to bring somebody a ray of joy from that happier world. No man can save men who feels that men cannot be saved. Why save a man from drowning if you send him back to a den of hopeless misery ? But no man ever complained of the total worthlessness of life who ever saved another from death, anguish, or despair. The vulgarest revivalist finds ecstasy in his certainty that he plucks brands from the burning and raises them to eternal bliss. No mere physical ease can equal the happiness that shoots through the frame of the lowly hero who has plunged through wave or fire, and given some child back to its mother's arms. There is a heaven in that look of love and gratitude. However poor his life, it becomes worth living with a memory like that in it. The stains and degradations of it, and many of its griefs, are wiped out.

While it is the high privilege of modern science to

show men that the sorrows superiority brings to the individual are inconsiderable beside the joys it wins by helpfulness, it is the high mission of art to anticipate the beautiful and happy world, to weave its rainbows and dawns around the present, to paint the pictures of it, and sing its songs, and show its noble figures on the stage in secure happiness, all evil disappearing beyond the last field and over the last stile from the ideal world.¹ The artist is forerunner of the Christ that is to be, and he wanders from his divine task when before the weary toilers of the world he dangles all the closet skeletons they would fain forget, instead of showing each how he may be a saviour, and, by calling a smile to some face, a joy to some heart, taste the joy that all will share when Sorrow has borne its last load home.

¹ Schopenhauer, in his essay on *The Miseries of Life*, admits that under the charm of a beautiful work of art—painting, statue, music—the torture-wheel of the human Ixion pauses.

PRAYER

SOMETIMES the very excellence of a thing results in its ruin. There are men who set before themselves high ambitions, seek the richest treasures ; but in the process of reaching them the man is transformed, and when he arrives at his goal finds the treasure dross, because the power to get the good out of it is gone. Again, there are people to whom Christianity is so priceless, so essential, that in maintaining it their hearts freeze—they lose charity, sweetness, veracity. In making the Christian the man is unmade. The same is true of morals and institutions. Our toiling masses justly value their weekly day of rest ; but they value it so much that their Sunday commits suicide. They are in such a panic lest it shall be taken from them that the Sunday becomes arduous, unlovely, and men do not so much rest as they are paralysed. And much the same may be said of the great symbols of what is called religion. The Bible, the life of Jesus, the mystical Christian institutions, have a real value in the light of history and science. The people feel that there is something precious in these things : by them alone the masses of men are connected with the ages of humanity and the “process of the suns.” But the traditional value they set on them prevents their getting at the deeper truth and larger culture they might supply, since few read their own scriptures with as much freedom as they bring to other books ;

and the freedom when attained too often finds no better way of utilising images than the Cromwellian plan of melting and coining them into money of one kind or another.

That, indeed, is better than idolising them, for this makes men their victims. An Eastern apologue says : "There was an old man who possessed heaps of gold ; but he was thin, hungry, haggard, ragged, and dwelt in the utmost wretchedness. But once a child came to the old man and said, 'Father, I have found out a way to make us happy. We shall not starve any more, nor shiver with cold ; we shall have plenty, comfort, and joy.' But the old man glared at the child and said, 'Would you deprive me of my gold ?'"

Alas, the old man had long been deprived of his gold ; the real man—the hungry, shivering man—did not possess the gold ; it possessed him, and both were dead together, as coffin and corpse are dead together.

I have many a time heard much the same kind of answer as that given to the child, when it has been proposed to turn sacred things and customs into real values. All the religious dogmas and institutions around us are treasures ; they are as worthless as unused gold until converted into the necessities of life. And, in an indirect way, that is what many people do with them, insomuch that it is doubtful whether the Christian symbols would last if nothing were to be got by them. But the honest way is for each form to last so long as it can really serve the purpose it was meant to serve ; and then, if it is turned to any other, it ought to be in an open, truthful way as when Egyptians and Japanese sell their gods to

collectors. That is an honourable business. It would not be honourable if they professed belief in the gods, and that they were sold to go and sanctify Europe.

From among the Christian sanctities let us select one to consider for a little—Prayer. There is no part of a pious training so sacredly enjoined as prayer. It is especially a characteristic of religious movements that they break through formal services, litanies—which are not really prayers at all—and struggle with invisible powers for their cause. The Reformation, the Puritan, the Wesleyan movements were marked by perpetual prayer; and their disciples have always claimed that their success was an answer to prayer—which, in a sense, was no doubt true; for their prayers were the expressions of real forces in themselves moving on to real purposes. But now, when there is no such all-compelling hurricane—when, in our peaceful hour of thought and feeling, no trumpet is heard from without reminding us that we are soldiers in a great conflict—now, when that militant faith of the universal Church has sunk down to the dregs of the population, a very serious confusion is apt to arise in any mind that attempts to pray. To whom are we praying? For what are we praying? And why should we pray for it? Are we praying because of old habit, or because of a genuine conviction that prayer has a definite place in the economy of nature, like eating and working? Here is quite an array of questions already—others might be added; and, if the mind trips on one of those questions, the prayer is thrown into that shadow of unbelief which is its shadow of death. I am assuming now that there is a real effort at prayer. I leave out of the question the mere going through forms in home or church without

reflection. I am concerned only with those who have entered their closet and shut the door ; who mean to be sincere, and are too truthful to leave their intellects outside.

To whom shall such pray? To the laws of the universe, conscious or unconscious? If they do not know that those laws are unswerving, they must doubt if they can be swerved by the prayer of a mortal who cannot know what would be the result, even were his prayer an adequate force. This kind of doubt is not of scepticism. The experience of the world in many ages has been sufficiently summed up to convince human intelligence that effects are related to causes. The laws of nature may be adapted in many ways to human benefit ; but it is always by skill, force, science ; in no case is it by mere longing or aspiration, still less by the breath or tongue, however earnest.

But it may be that, within these adamant walls of cause and effect, the prayerful spirit feels the presence of a parental love—a love superhuman and omnipotent ; and to this would pray. Then rises another doubt. Is not omnipotent love doing the very best? Can it require human suggestion or instigation? I know the old casuistry, that this divine love may have arranged it as the condition of its blessings that mortals should petition for them. It may have ; but has it? Where is any evidence that divine love has framed conditions around its love such as no kind parent would impose on a child? Is that our ideal of parental love, that it should do good to the child only when asked?

And then, supposing these difficulties surmounted, we are only delivered to a fresh series when we come

to consider what we should pray for. A refined mind shrinks from praying for a material benefit; yet Cicero thought it much nobler to petition the gods for material gifts, not within every man's reach, than to petition them for virtue (the very essence of which is that it be achieved by him who obtains it.) If virtue were given, if piety and charity were given, that would not mark any inward growth or character. The best essence of every good thing, outward or inward, is to have earned it. I once heard Theodore Parker decline to pray, as he had been requested, for the rescue of a fugitive slave. "I will not ask God to do our work," he said. But presently he was praying for more light and love of liberty, and that seemed equally asking God to do our work.

But supposing that problem settled, we come to the question: Why should we pray for what we really think might well be given us? Is that the best method? If we had never been taught so, would we now adopt that method?

I venture to affirm that it is virtually impossible for an intelligent mind, living in this age of science and inquiry, to avoid having one or more of these questions enter into the closet when the door is shut. The result must be that, however the questions may be adjusted, it must be on a balance of probabilities; the very balancing of probabilities is a sceptical process; and in prayer under such conditions there will be confusion of feelings, wandering of thoughts, and an absence of that perfect faith which has always been felt as the necessary condition under which prayer can be effectual, subjectively or objectively. In no scripture ever written, in any race, was there ever a promise held out that any prayer could be

answered except the prayer of perfect faith. It is the uniform experience that one doubt lays the whole prayer in ruins. These human experiences mean a great deal. A vast number of prayers have been, in a sense, answered ; had it not been so, the custom would have been abandoned ages ago. Of course, I do not believe they were answered by any supernatural power ; but, when people had perfect faith, what they prayed for was the supreme desire of their hearts. What they so ardently desired that they brought it under the eye of their god, what was so longed for that they consecrated it with prayer, that was organically in them ; and nature had long ago provided that what people passionately desire, and firmly believe they can have, that in many cases they will have. The prayer was not the cause, but the sign of it—like the colour on fruit, the sign of its ripeness. Of course, if faith were logical it might operate in a reverse way—that is, faith that Providence would answer the prayer would supersede effort. Such has indeed been the case with millions—notably of certain Eastern races, enfeebled and decaying because they are always hoping to get things by prayer instead of work. But that is not the case with our own race. We are in the grip of elements that compel men to work. We are also evolved out of these exacting elements ; their energies are born in us ; and, while they may get one expression through the lips, they get a corresponding one through head, heart, and hand. Therefore, prayer, to the believing, was merely a characteristic expression of the actual force going on in life, moving towards the same end, which, when reached, has been credited to the prayer instead of to the toil. Nor was the prayer idle so long as sincere

and practical. It then had, to a certain extent, the great advantage of shaping before the mind just what it aimed at. It defined an ideal, and filtered out of it everything unworthy to come under the eye of a god.

A friend once said to me : " If I were to see a man on his knees, I would not like to tell him to get up." He did not need to explain why. Even the coarsest, most prosaic man, coming before one sincerely conceived as a Supreme Being, or his Creator, would raise his thoughts, would lay aside trifling, would try and see his desires at their best, would for a time be something of a poet, realising the invisible. And if a man can so detach his aim and hope from all that is trivial, make them thoughtful, pure, real, then he has set clearly before his mind something more or less related to his constitution and to the nature of things. And his constitution and the nature of things would be gathered up by that prayer, and directed to a clear, definite, and reasonable object, more likely to be obtained because so uplifted before heart and mind. Remembering that the ancient, and essential, definition of prayer is a petition made in perfect faith, I am inclined to think that as a rule people have received what they have really prayed for. That is, I imagine that when it came to the point the unreasonable and improbable has not risen into the prayer; if uttered, it was with a doubt in the mind, therefore no part of the prayer; consequently there have been few real prayers, and those few, representing absolute faith and consecrated desire, are very strong forces in life and in nature.

But there is another aspect in which prayer is to be considered. That which is most pleasing in prayer is, so to say, the reverent gesture. A man looking to

something higher than himself is, in a selfish world, already a nobler being. And there is within this upward look an element vital to a complete character. It is the effort at making the universe a personal concern. To enter into the closet and in secret pray to an ideal Power conceived as supreme in the universe was the primitive way of recognising one's individual relation to the universe. Every human being feels himself to be different from all others in some respects. Each feels that to some extent he is a new organ, however small, in the system of things. There cannot be an entire commingling of spirit with spirit. There is something high and pathetic when this individual, conscious of a variety of power, feeling responsibility for it, tries to open a window or door out into the universe by prayer that his life may have dignity.

What is all this universe to me? What has it to do with my life? Is there anything in me that has relation to the whole—to sun and star, to time and space, and to the infinite? Each individual has proceeded out of the immeasurable universe; there is in him something of everything that is, and of all; the procession of ages and their evolutions are represented in him; and he is right in the feeling of a secret communion possible between himself and the universe.

Of these high and essential elements prayer was once the expression, and it is of the utmost importance that they should be preserved. My objection to the form of prayer is that it no longer serves the spirit which originated it. It is now rarely harmonious with man at his best. The planet has wheeled into another intellectual and moral region, and the forms

of antiquity have waxed old as a garment, and are consumed by the moth of doubt. Men no longer pray for what really concerns them, for the best gifts and blessings of the world. Temporal and actual things used to be prayed for ; and they ought to have been, for it is with and amid temporal and material things that an individual mind and heart have to grow and embody themselves in fruit. The fact that people no longer venture to pray for what their hearts do secretly most desire—what their whole energies are seeking every day—but devote their prayers to vague and pallid sentiments, is a confession that this old form no longer represents the real forces which made that unceasing prayer which was fulfilled. Pythagoras said that the time when men are most honest is when they present themselves before the gods. When we find men praying prayers that are not honest—such partisan thanksgivings, for instance, as an archbishop recently issued about the war and the Suez Canal—we know that they do not feel themselves before God, but before men. So someone said of a prayer in a fashionable American church, that it was the finest prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience. The fault is not so much in the clergy. The conditions of sincerity have changed. The archbishop was honestly worshipping, not God, but Gladstone.

We need new bottles for the new wine of heart and life. It is imperatively required that out of the actual convictions of thinking men the spirit of reverence, the sense of a personal relation to the universe, the consecration of the aims of life, shall organise for themselves an original expression—one that shall be true, not tainted by doubt, so that by it shall be

obtained those answers and fulfilments which prayer attained when it was real.

This is a case in which I cannot be asked what form would I put in the place of prayer, for with spiritual minds, however orthodox, prayer has long ceased to be a form. As the poet Montgomery wrote :—

Prayer is the heaving of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

The Churches which adopt ancient forms of prayer thereby confess that they have none of their own. The litanies have literary, antiquarian, and a certain human, value ; they are a kind of scriptures by which our sentiment is connected with that of the human family ; but when used as present prayers the individuality of worshippers is largely lost. Except in public prayer in the synagogues or churches, which Jesus rebuked (in vain !) and which is not real prayer, we have to consider the attitude only of the mind and heart. In prayer the attitude is that of expecting response and help from a supernatural Power without regard to the laws of nature—expecting a miracle, in fact.

If we have given up the expectation of any miracle, inward or outward, we must raise our conception of the universe proportionately ; we should consider that above those mechanic laws of nature, as we call them, there is a force of reason, a force of love, which is always mastering and bending the laws of nature to moral and human purposes. We see in the achievements of knowledge and genius, and in the development of mankind, a steady and successful siege against

nature. We are thus led to believe that there are powers and resources close around us—physical, mental, moral, religious—which, could we lay hold on them, would help us to achieve that which we desire. When a workman wants iron hammered he does not pray verbally to have it done; but he silently and practically prays to the law of gravitation, and the weight of the planet brings down his trip-hammer. The shape of a ship is man's prayer to the waves; his sails appeal successfully to the winds. Man no longer cries to Neptune or Eolus in behalf of his freight; the universal powers attend to the individual need. When we ascend from these physical agents to those that are moral, we find it equally true that the universe co-operates with every private effort which does not try to violate those laws. Nature says, *Impera parendo*. The moral universe is no less willing to bring its entire force to build up the character, the health, the happiness, of him who seeks its co-operation by fulfilling the conditions through which its virtue is obtained.

And the fundamental condition is that every mind should enjoy an original relation to the universe. As it is necessary, if a man is to do good work with his hands, that he should know the art and mystery of that he undertakes to do, so must he study the secret of excellence, the best truth of his time, that all spiritual resources may be at his command.

The Wesleyans groped for this truth in their transcendental doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. They taught that a man must pray and pray until at last he touched the spring of blessings, as it were, and they were poured out on him. He received personally an inward communication from the Holy Spirit that

he was a regenerate child of God. This is a somewhat superstitious form of saying that each individual must have an inward experience, one of his own; and the rational thinker no less insists that each mind must have a work of thought go on in it, by which it passes from ignorance to knowledge, from the conventional to the original view of things, from a life directed by tradition to a life guided by individual insight. The world gives each of us a several and particular experience—trials of our own, events pertaining to ourselves—and these ought to correspond with an inward life and development of our own, by which we shall arrive at the same point, no doubt, at which others have arrived, but by a path of our own making, and with a special knowledge by which we have acquired a key to unlock the benefits which the universe holds for us.

I always thought there was a touch of profound reality in that verse of an old psalm: "When thou saidst to me, 'Seek my face,' my heart replied, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" I believe that heart does not exist to which some appeal like this has not come out of the universe—some personal appeal—that it should raise its life higher, aspire to a larger horizon, seek to be somewhat in itself, instead of merely travelling through life on the routine of others. It may have been when conquered by some temptation; it may have been when so made aware of our moral weakness; it may have been after some bitter grief which reminded us that we had not provided any resource of thought or strength of character to lean upon in emergencies. Such thoughts are entirely natural. We have proceeded out of this universe; there is nothing in it which is not potentially in us; and when

any blow out of the universe falls upon us, when any great event occurs which has in it universal elements, these germs start within us. Deep answers to deep. We feel that we have in us that which relates us to the vast order around us, and yet have not brought out these germs to their flower, that they might wear the colours of the sky, and harmonise with the eternal beauty. What forbids that we should say, Thy face, O source of all my life, will I seek. Nature, which has made this body, I will seek its perfect development and health ! Love, that has made this heart, it shall seek thy fulness ! Reason, that has formed this intelligence in me, it shall aspire to thee, in thy great light shall expand ! That these great essences are in the universe is proved by the fact that they are in me ; and if they are in the universe, why should I not have them ? Not with the lips will I pray for them, but with heart and hand, with study and thought, will I pray for them ; I will seek out where I may find them, and spare no energy and enthusiasm until I secure every great blessing which nature has promised me in my own constitution.

To do this implies an exercise of all the emotions and spiritual reverences which made the vital elements of prayer, when that was possible. It fulfils the old injunction, "Pray without ceasing." That is, it involves a constant attitude of reverence for that which is greater and higher than ourselves ; it unites the bended knee and upward eye ; and it implies that the heart shall oftentimes meditate in secret, and hold personal communion with the unattained ideal which has sent its light into the mind, and whispered its hope to the heart.

All this, you may say, implies a certain maturity of

thought and experience; but what are we to do for our children? How are we to train them to reverence, and to aspire after large ideas? My answer is—Do not be in a hurry to develop a precocious spiritual growth in your child. If you do, you will, after all, be apt to overlay and crush its real power with your own life, which is not theirs, nor to be theirs. They, too, have the right to enjoy an original relation to the universe. If their religion is to be worth anything, they must find it for themselves. What you can do is to start them on the right way, to strengthen the germs of reverence in them—reverence for what is comprehensible by their age. Let them revere their mother and father; let them revere woman, and venerate the wisdom that is gained by old age. That will do to begin with. And see to it that every faculty they have is replied to. Every power in a child is an unconscious prayer. It has ideality—let it read and hear poetry; let it see pictures. It is continually dreaming of life—the great life whose play is perpetually around it—and wondering what part it is to play when it arrives there. Respond to that. Pick out good romances, suitable to its age, that it may learn how others have played their part; and take it to see good dramas. By so doing we shall also raise our own faculties; and shall repair, so far as may be, the errors and failures in our own lives.

And, finally, I will remind you that the best thing to take the place of prayers we can no longer offer is ourselves to hear the prayers rising silently around us, and respond. The man of the past offered prayers; the man of the future will answer them.

THE FIRST PERSON

I HAVE been interested at seeing some telegraph-poles which have been perforated by woodpeckers. They came from Scandinavia, where many species of this bird are found. In those forests it is a common thing to find the holes so made quite through the hard, dead poles along which the wires are stretched. It is supposed that the poor bird is deceived by the humming produced in such poles by vibration of the wires above. Here, he thinks, must be some wonderful creature, some rich feast! He attacks the dry, seasoned wood; with enthusiasm of hunger he toils; deeper and deeper he goes, disappears, the buzzing lure just before him. At length light appears, but, alas, it fades into the light of common day, and the weary bird finds that all his toil has been for nothing. Far less toil spent on the soft bark of living trees would have secured food for itself and its little ones. How long will the woodpeckers be deceived by these strange additions to their groves? Perhaps, as the centuries go on, there may be a survival of those that let telegraph-poles alone, and stick to the living trees wherein their race has so long found nourishment.

But if woodpeckers are anything like men, that will be a long process. Through many ages mankind have been similarly deceived by the near effects of unknown causes; have projected into them some image of their own fancy; have toiled through their

theological pole again and again without gaining the wisdom to keep them from spending their strength on the next pole set up. Poor woodpecker, that canst never know the secrets of empires speeding along those wires that cause thy little dream, thou art the fable of man, who as little can know the primal causes of phenomena that fill him with vain fancies. Yet perhaps thy posterity, taught by experience, may fable a wiser human species, who, amid theories grown gray, may be content with the green tree and golden fruit of life !

Didron, in his great work on Christian Iconography, gives the history of the representations of God the Father, and traces in them the changing religious and political conditions. For the first twelve centuries of the Christian era there was no representation of the face or form of God. During that vast period there is seen only a hand extended from a cloud—a single hand turned earthward. Is it the hand of a deity disappearing, or of one about to appear? Into that cloud a deity has just disappeared, and this is the first sign of a new deity emerging. The deity who has disappeared may be named with various names—Zeus, Jupiter, or Jahvé—but he means one and the same conception, a personification of universal law and force wrapped up in his own glory. Human in form he had gradually become ; but, as the Trojan Horse was only a horse in shape, full of armed men, so was this deity man-shaped, while the crushing elemental powers were in him. He had been tremblingly adored, not for his humanity, but for his non-humanity. But humanity had grown stronger, more courageous, and more compassionate, and wearied of a deity who bore no part in the struggles of mankind. Man had climbed to the idea of a human god ; from being

mythological, this new deity had become historical ; and the foremost nations of the world had placed the divine crown upon a divine man, born of woman, going about doing good. The tidings spread from Olympus to Sinai ; the mountains trembled ; the conservators of traditional temples and authority beheld mankind rushing after this new man-god, and risen in revolution against the old divine dynasty. This revolution took the historical form of Gnosticism, which held Jahvé to be the real Satan, the great enemy of man, whose despotism the Blessed Serpent had defeated in Eden, and against whom Jesus was the leader of a universal insurrection. For more than a century Gnosticism waged its brilliant revolution ; and, though it had to succumb, it bequeathed an influence which secured for Jesus the real homage of the human heart, while nominal and ceremonial worship were left to Jahvé. Gnosticism had announced that the days of non-human gods were numbered.

So the Ancient of Days disappeared ; and yet his altars, priests, rites, and the thrones he had consecrated, remained, and had to be protected. This could only be in one way. The old god must be humanised, must be harmonised with the new arrangements, identified with the new god. All that was done behind that cloud from which at length the earthward hand appeared. In early pictures it is seen now handing to Moses the Tables of the Law, and now stretched out to receive the soul of Stephen ; now holding back the arm of Abraham when about to sacrifice his son Isaac, and again extending a crown to the infant Jesus. It is not shown smiting and cruel, as described in ancient scriptures ; the moral and humane incidents are selected and combined with

the new spirit, and the way is thus prepared for the reappearance of the old god of nature as partner in the new firm into whose control the world is passing. At length, in the thirteenth century, this reformed deity makes a further appearance. Where only a hand had been seen, there is now a face. But this face has the same features as that of Jesus. For a long time after this face of the First Person appeared in the clouds, and even after his form had been portrayed, the two figures can only be distinguished as Father and Son by the emblems they bear, as globe or cross. In some pictures they cannot be distinguished at all.

It must not be supposed that art acted by any whim or fancy of its own. Those pictures and effigies appear in churches, in missals, or other sacred places, and represent each epoch to which they refer far more than the works of the theologians. The ascription of a coeternal nature to Father and Son in the creed may seem metaphysical, but originally it corresponded with a tremendous religious phenomenon. When the popular heart had abandoned all other gods for Jesus, the popular mind went the same way. Believing that this was the very god come down from heaven, the people unhesitatingly ascribed to him all that had been before attributed to Jahvé—all, that is, that they liked, and leaving out what they did not like. On the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa Jesus, and not the Father, is depicted creating the world. In other instances he is seen with the world in his hand, his feet resting on the arch of heaven, blessing the surrounding seraphim, no other god being beside him. He is shown creating Adam and Eve, also directing Moses, Noah, and Isaiah.

It were easy to multiply, and to confirm from early writings, these evidences that in the earlier centuries of our era Jesus had quite superseded Jahvé, had taken possession of his throne, and been invested with the glory of his ancient deeds. When the hand appears in religious pictures emerging from the sky, it is the sign of a discredited system trying to regain its sceptre. To that end the more ancient deity must be pictured exactly like the new one, must borrow his graciousness and humanity, and claim that the new deity had been really his coeternal creative agent in everything he had done aforetime. That is the meaning of this gradual appearance beside Jesus of a figure apparently his twin.

This was the first step in the formation of the Christian Trinity. There is a story traceable to the early years of our era which shows the moral atmosphere amid which these ideas were developing themselves to the result now traditional. It is related by Hyginus. When the tyrant Dionysius was reigning in Sicily, a patriot named Moros, who had resolved to rid his country of that oppressor, fell into his hands. Dionysius ordered him to be crucified. Moros was ready to die, but asked only to be allowed to visit his sister. This required a three days' absence for the journey, and the tyrant consented if the patriot could find a friend to remain as his hostage. Selenuntius gladly stepped forward, agreeing to be himself crucified on the appointed hour if his friend should not return. On his way back Moros was impeded by a swollen river, and with great difficulty arrived at the place of execution a few minutes late, just as they were about to nail Selenuntius as his hostage to the cross. He demanded that his friend should be

released ; but Selenuntius claimed it as his right to die, because Moros had not returned at the exact moment. Moros protested that it was he who had offended Dionysius, and that he had the right to die. The two friends, who had never contended before, now warmly competed for the prior right to be crucified ; at which sight the tyrant was so moved that he released them both, and begged these devoted friends to accept him as a third in their covenant of friendship. This popular story bears a striking resemblance to that with which the crucifixion of Christ was associated. He was nailed to the cross, not for his own sin, but as hostage for the sin of humanity, under sentence of a celestial Dionysius. The heavenly potentate suffered a disgrace from which he could only be relieved by claiming, through his theologians, that he had not really executed the hostage of humanity, but taken him up to his right hand, and at the same time pardoned the offending race of man. This was his petition to become united with the saviour and the victim dove in a bond of friendship—a Trinity.

It must be borne in mind that we are dealing with a period of time when art represented to the people their only scriptures. They had no Bible except such as priests chose to give them by means of these pictures and sculptures ; and the priests ordered of artists, for their church windows, walls, or altars, just such subjects as would draw the masses to them. Art and theology thus became the great factors of natural selection in religion. They had succeeded in filtering the scriptural records of Jahvé of their most repulsive features, and in uniting the non-human with the human deity as First and Second Persons in

the scheme of human salvation. They had relieved both of responsibility for the sentence of eternal death on the human race, requiring the crucifixion, by the invention that Jesus had died, not to satisfy Jahvé, but to ransom man from the dominion of a dark and evil power called Satan, who was made the scapegoat for all the ills that flesh is heir to. This scheme was successful, for mankind had not yet arrived at a phase of culture which could recognise the incongruity between divine omnipotence and satanic sway in the earth.

When from being first a hand turned earthward, then a face, the deity came fairly on earth, he was no sooner distinguished from his son than he was slighted. The pious M. Didron is indignant at the way this First Person is treated in Christian art even down to the fifteenth century. "Finally," he says, "when the figure of God the Father is actually brought upon the scene, the part assigned him is frequently ridiculous, rude, hateful, and even cruel. Thus, on the capital of a pillar in Notre Dame du Port, at Clermont, God is represented as striking the guilty Adam with his clenched hand—a strange and most improper manner of reproving him for the crime he had committed; while an angel at the same time seizes our poor first father by the beard and plucks it out. The actions both of God and of the angel are marked by extreme brutality. In the Bibliothèque Royale is a Latin manuscript, adorned with probably Italian miniatures, and in one of these God is represented as expelling Adam and Eve from Paradise, and driving them before him with blows of an arrow, precisely as, in the *Iliad*, Apollo is represented pursuing the Greeks." It was after the usual disparity

of age between fathers and sons began to change the twin-like resemblance of the two forms that this want of reverence for the First Person was shown. He is represented bald, decrepit, or sunken into senility; he has to be supported by the Holy Ghost, pictured as a youth. And, again, this must not be supposed the work of artists alone. Its reflection is in the Apostles' Creed, where only one short clause refers to God, while five—more than half the Creed—refer to Jesus. It is shown in the fact that no Church was ever dedicated to God the Father, while Jesus has been so honoured under many titles. It survives in the Christian custom of passing the name of God in the Creed without homage, and bowing when that of Jesus is mentioned. This bowing of the congregation at the name of Jesus is especially remarkable. The Third Council of Carthage decreed that "prayer at the altar shall always be directed to the Father," but the impulse to pray to Jesus was too strong to be controlled by this canon; and when at length the clergy had to read prayers addressed to God alone, though always through Christ, it would seem that the laity avenged this ceremonial subordination of their chief by silently bowing at the mention of his name alone. With the spread of Christianity this First Person resembled so much other ancient but superseded figures with which the pagan mind was familiar, that he was but little revered even by the priests. Thus, in a miracle-play performed by French priests, God the Father was represented in dotage, and nearly always asleep. He has to be aroused. "Wake up!" cries an angel, shaking him; "your son is about to be crucified!"

The distant forms and disputes of the early Church

may appear to be about technicalities and trifles, but such is not the case. It was under these disguises that men were making history, and our moral world was fashioned. In the course of time the reactionary spirit which recovered the ancient deity by assimilating him to Jesus developed itself in formidable and practical ways. After centuries of degradation the image of the First Person was raised to be the awful symbol of earthly authority and majesty. In Italy he was pictured as a pope, with triple crown ; in France as a king, and also a pope with tiara of five crowns ; in Germany as an emperor, invested with the symbols and dignities of Barbarossa and Charlemagne. A corresponding change now took place in the representations of Jesus. If the First Person had recovered his throne by assimilation with the meek and lowly Jesus, Christ had now to retain his power by becoming a fierce and awful Jahvé. His humanity was largely lost, and instead of the Lamb, the Good Shepherd, and other gentle forms under which he had won the popular heart, he was now painted as Jahvé's terrible Judge parting the sheep and the goats. Then the common people had nobody in heaven to love except Mary and the loving human saints—chiefly women—of which Protestantism deprived the North ; not, however, without leaving their shadow in a great want, such as was expressed by a poor Scotch woman mourning for her little boy, who said to a friend of mine : "They be all men folk up there, and won't know how to do for him." By Dante the First Person was rehabilitated ; he was invested with classic majesty by the genius of Raphael and Michael Angelo ; but with the rise of the middle class he became vulgarised, and finally he disappeared again

and for ever, leaving his representation in a triangle with his Hebrew name in the centre.

Now, this long development represents the human woodpecker's progress through his hard telegraph-pole. He enters his dogmatic system, toils after his fancied prize, and comes out on the other side to find himself face to face with familiar nature again, with nothing better than a keener memory of his nestlings, nothing diviner than the love that feeds and broods over them. And in this progress he had repeated what his ancestors had done again and again in those great religions which the Christian merely hated when he might have found in them the experience which would have saved him from repetition of their errors. There is a fourth-century Roman sculpture representing Jesus as an Apollo, with a naked bearded god underneath supporting on his head the feet of the young god, in senatorial robe, seated on his curule chair. It may be either Jove or Jahvé thus degraded under the feet of Jesus. It is a link which connects the Christian evolution with that which preceded it. The development of Greek religion (or Roman) is from sleepy Saturn to active Zeus, from fading Zeus to Apollo, and on to the man-god Herakles, and to the tender goddesses of the earth. That is another perforated pole. And back of that is the great Hindu development. A friend has just sent me a picture of the holy of holies in the pagoda at Seringham. The presiding deity of that place is a figure resembling Vishnu, the Saviour, a beautiful youth, both feminine and vigorous, reclining on the folds of the great hooded serpent, and decorated with gems. Above him in the air hovers the Hindu First Person, Brahma, holding a lotus, beside him twelve stars.

Brahma sits on a cloud. Just as there is not a church in Christendom dedicated to the First Person of the Trinity, so there is not a temple in India dedicated to the First Person of the Triad. Brahma is left out in the cold with his cloud and his stars, which pass and repass above the struggles of mortals with silent indifference, while the heart of man turns to altars of the incarnate deities, whose trophies are the slain serpent and other vanquished evils. Poor Brahma is quite a pathetic figure, looking down from his cloud, extending his lotus and spoon, trying to recover his lost place by connecting himself with the younger and beloved deity, the preserver of men, in his beautiful pagoda. But it proved impossible. Brahma, like Jahvé, is now but a name in a mythological triangle. The Hindu woodpecker is just now emerging from that hole, where Sanscrit scholars are tracking its progress, and coming out to find itself no nearer than its Vedic ancestors to the secrets of the universe; not without some of the wisdom of experience, however, for it sternly rejects its ancient deities when they try to return in disguises of the Christian Triad, and the Jewish Jahvé and Satan; while it follows closely after its Western mate in seeking the human religion related to the need of its nest.

Even among the primitive peoples a similar process is sometimes traceable. How the Polynesians of Mangaia got rid of their god Ru, their First Person, is reported by a missionary, Mr. Gill, in his *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*. The natives told it as follows :—

“The sky is built of solid blue stone. At one time it almost touched the earth, resting on the stout

broad leaves of the *teve*.....In this narrow space between earth and sky the inhabitants of this world were pent up. Ru, whose usual residence was *Avaiki*, or the shades, had come up for a time to this world of ours. Pitying the wretched, confined residence of the inhabitants, he employed himself in endeavouring to raise the sky a little.....Hence Ru was named 'the sky-supporter.'.....One day, when the old man was surveying his work, his graceless son *Mâui* contemptuously asked him what he was doing there. Ru replied, 'Who told youngsters to talk? Take care of yourself, or I will hurl you out of existence.' 'Do it, then,' shouted *Mâui*. Ru was as good as his word, and forthwith seized *Mâui*, who was of small stature, and threw him to a great height. In falling *Mâui* assumed the form of a bird, and lightly touched the ground, perfectly unharmed. *Mâui*, now thirsting for revenge, in a moment resumed his natural form, but exaggerated to gigantic proportions, and ran to his father, saying :—

Ru, who supportest the many heavens,

The third, even to the highest, ascend !

Inserting his head between the old man's legs, he exerted all his prodigious strength, and hurled poor Ru, sky and all, to a tremendous height—so high, indeed, that the blue sky could never get back again. Unluckily, however, for the sky-supporting Ru, his head and shoulders got entangled among the stars. He struggled hard, but fruitlessly, to extricate himself. *Mâui* walked off well pleased with having raised the sky to its present height, but left half his father's body and both his legs ingloriously suspended between heaven and earth. Thus perished Ru. His body rotted away, and his bones came

tumbling down from time to time, and were shivered on the earth into countless fragments. These shivered bones of Ru are scattered over every hill and valley of Mangaia, to the very edge of the sea."

This simple way of dealing with ancient deities is confined to savages. In civilised countries even the devil is not killed outright, much less Jove or Jahvé. As the representative of vested interests the ancient god is retained, compromised with, but turned into a symbol, worshipped with ceremony, while the practical service passes to the new form.

But now let us turn to consider how the case stands with our own age, and see whether, while civilised enough to invent the telegraph, we may not to some extent be pecking away at a theologic pole of our own. I think so, but that our eyes are out of it, and we shall soon be free enough to track our own perforation as philosophically as those of our predecessors.

Protestantism terminated and sealed up that Christianity which art had created. It began a new one, the creation of the printing-press. That Bible which the Church kept close, and from which it selected, to be preached in pictures, just what would be favourable to its own influence, was now given to the world. From the printing-press, like its fabled tree, men ate the forbidden fruit, and knew both the evil and good in the Bible. Christendom had committed itself, while as yet much was suppressed, to the dogma that every word in the Bible was the word of God. This was a sentence of wholesale Hebraism. The First Person of the Trinity, whom it had taken the Church fifteen centuries to put in the place of Jove and Jahvé, now relapsed into the Judaic form. Jahvé was summoned

from his starry sleep of ages, and set up on the printing-press for his Sinai to give laws and dogmas to the northern race. But it was a fatal triumph for him, and for Protestant Christianity. The arrest of the selecting principle, the imposition of a bibliolatry which included barbarous with later ages, the bad with the good, bound on Christianity a burden it could not bear through the epoch of science and civilisation. Milton made a brave effort to raise Jahvé into majesty ; but his English genius was too much for his Jewish dogma, and his Satan remains a more attractive figure than his Jahvé. Every year of Protestantism, with its papal Book, has swelled the clouds into which Jahvé has passed, until now only his hand is visible, grasping his Sabbath and his Blasphemy Law, as the last remnants of his authority. The First Person, having been merged in Jahvé, disappears with him. Our age of Science cannot believe the scriptures of Jahvé ; our social sentiment is scandalised by much in them. There is now no First Person except the Queen. She is the head of the Church. The Church accepts its Archbishop, not from the heavenly, but the English, throne. The *congé d'élire* remains only as a witness to the disappearance of the celestial Head of the Church. The rise of modern Theism is also a witness. The divine Person of Theism is no more Jahvé, or the First Person of the Trinity, than he is Apollo. He is the personification by and for our present time of the intelligence, conscience, and heart which form its ideals. This nineteenth-century deity is defined against the God of the Bible and the God of the Church. His name is Love. And what is love but a supreme expression of the heart of humanity ?

In the era of the printing-press the stages of development, which formerly required centuries before they could be passed, have been reduced to embryonic phases. The First Person of the Trinity reigned in England until the Commonwealth. He was succeeded by Jahvé, who reigned until the time of Newton. Newton was in the habit of uncovering his head when the name of God was mentioned in his presence. It was not homage to a deity who claimed to have created the world in six days ; it was not to the traditional head of a Trinity, a dogma which that great man had rejected ; it was a real reverence for the Law and Order, the Beauty and Majesty, which had been revealed to his own eye, and felt in his own heart. That was the God that had succeeded Jahvé in the mind of this country, a personification of wisdom as represented in the order of nature interpreted by science. That God of Nature, though freed from supernatural monstrosities, had to bear responsibility for the evils and imperfections of nature ; and, though he bequeathed to our century a poetic love of nature, which Christianity held accursed, that deity of Deism has steadily declined before the ideal of Theism.

This is the deification of Love. And it is at the incarnation of this latest deity in the pure human religion that we are all assisting. All the religious phenomena of our generation point like stars of Bethlehem to this nativity. Its signs are visible alike in the rise of Positivism, with its worship of Humanity, and in Ritualism, with its exaltation of Christ. Comte gave his followers the *Imitation of Christ* for their manual, and the Ritualists have surely shown an increased desire to imitate the

sympathy of Jesus for the poor. The carols of the new incarnation are heard in the multiplication of hymns to Jesus alone, as well as in the songs of secularism. Each god as he appears fulfils himself in many ways.

When a deity is born, it is of the moral ideal of the race, and he is necessarily detached from the non-human deities. To describe a god as Love is already a limitation. He is parted from an omnipotence which has failed to destroy the evils and end the agonies of mankind. He is laying aside the glories of having created the earth, including its evils, and of holding the universe in the hollow of his hand. Supreme Love cannot accept such egotistic magnificence while the millions of earth are suffering. It admits—nay, claims—that it is not omnipotent. It is only doing its best against the powers of evil. That is its advance towards incarnation. It accepts human limitations. It takes the side of man in his struggle against the forces of evil, however consecrated. This is the spirit of the religion of our age. The essence of it is its humanity. All sects and Churches are competing in their reverence for humanity; their claim is that they are meeting its needs and saving it. Here all are agreed. The controversies of our time turn on the desire of sects which originated in the service of the heavenly Personage to tack him on to this new religion, as Brahma was tacked on to Vishnu, or Jahvé to Jesus. The celestial First Person is represented in many titles to religious and social estates, and his advocates urge the humanitarians to call their new religion Christianity. The representatives of the rational Deism of the past, dreading another Gnostic revolution

against established sanctities, plead that this religion of love on earth shall be organised on the old monarchical model, and accept ceremonial subordination to a personal superhuman authority. The more advanced ask only that the family, the social unit, shall be the model, and a Heavenly Father acknowledged. In all these discussions it is observable that the First Person is drawing near to the human religion with an aspect like its own. Just as Jahvé, from being of old the God of Hosts and of Wrath, returned from his banishment in portraits not distinguishable from those of the gentle Jesus, so now we find all the deities of Churches and sects presented as embodiments of love and charity. Jahvé has hid away his hell, dismissed Satan; Jesus has descended from his throne of judgment, apologises for his cursings; and the Holy Ghost, saying no more of the unpardonable sin, has become a spirit of love and peace. Such are the theological transformations which this holy human babe has wrought even in its manger. A few foolish kings may persecute; but the wise are bringing gifts, and sincerely kneeling.

What will be the development and embodiment of this new avatar of the human religion one were bold to prophesy. But, if I may recall once more the true fable with which we started, it may remind us that we not only live in an age of telegraph-poles, but know their uses, and the causes of the humming in them, and even read the messages conveyed above them. And, as for the theological poles that follow each other through time, each with its perforation, we have got through the latest of these just at a time when religious science has discovered their meaning. In

fact, through them, from perforation to perforation, from the first nature-god to the last Logos of metaphysics, there are stretched invisible wires that convey to us messages from the immemorial past, and gathered up from the ages through which they have passed. They are messages from our fathers and mothers, from the lovers and saviours of men, from the innumerable millions of the earth, who from sorrows and wrongs have found repose in her bosom ; and they testify to us that they have again and again travelled the paths of speculation from beginning to end, that they have grappled every theologic problem known to us and proved it insoluble, that they have held all our doctrines and seen them weighed in the balances of experience and found wanting ; they warn us not again to go over this bitter experience, which has never failed to draw man from the earth that can respond to his labours of thought and knowledge into a desert without bound, where man can only pursue an ever-fugitive mirage of his lost world till the day when his bones bleach in its consuming sands.

Spend not your labour for that which satisfieth not ! So they warn by their message. And, listening, we ask of theologians : After you have attached the traditional holy name to our new faith, can you inspire us with love for it ? When a being becomes first, it is because some other being has become second ; and, though this first and second may represent rank in the creed, in the life of man they mean that the first has been superseded by the second ; that he has passed out of the human heart to lodgment on the lip or the attitude. Where is the man who loves Jahvé as he loves his family ? Where

is the woman who loves the Trinity as she loves her child, and can by it be kindled to such emotion and devotion as fill her maternal breast? O my friends, Love is the only God that endureth for ever, and Work the only worship that does not sink to a ceremony.

THE FREETHINKER'S VISION BEYOND DEATH

WHAT is a freethinker? All thought is free. The fettered mind may do many things: it may perceive, pervert, scheme, outwit; but, when it thinks, it converses with truth and burns through all bonds to things inferior to truth. The word "freethinker" is an epithet for those whose thoughts were not subordinated to the authority of a traditional "revelation." Those who gave the epithet are beginning to be dissatisfied with it. They do not like the implied confession that their own thoughts are not free under creeds. It is their affair. Meanwhile, those to whom it is applied need not care for the word. It is more important we should take care that our thoughts should be free—that is, genuine—thoughts. This is not secured merely by discarding a traditional revelation or an external authority. A mind may be fettered by prejudice or self-interest or timidity. The outward chains are now rusty, and of little importance except as they are reinforced by the inward chains. Last year (1882) an eminent nobleman was laughed out by the peers for proposing to make belief in "an Almighty God" binding on the legislators of this Christian land. He said that he introduced his measure under a sense of what was due to Almighty God; he withdrew it in deference to Lord Salisbury. Even a Bishop opposed

him, though intimating that he was prepared to exclude from Parliament those who wrote works expressing their disbelief in a God. The door would be left open for hypocrites. This is what holy authority has come down to. In the House of Commons a knight had had the chivalry to call for prosecution of a lady because of her opinions, and to demand prosecution of a newspaper for its criticisms on Christianity. The Government answered that such prosecutions do more harm than good. [The defence of the faith thus fell from the gentry to the livery. What would the Almighty do but for his London Corporation?]

Where do these zealots come from? Who has been teaching them, that they should dangle this skeleton of the Inquisition before England? If they have been brought up in English Churches, did they never hear there of such a thing as the right of private judgment? Did they never learn that the seed of every cause is the blood of its martyrs? Have they no eyes to see that already they have raised local radicals into world-wide fame by their persecutions, and have increased the circulation of their "freethought literature" a thousandfold? But I remember, these bigots are not free. Ixion-like they are bound to their wheel. They are contending for their Creator—that is, for a system which has created them magnates out of commonplace men. Reason would never have created them such. They owe their all to institutions based on pious traditions discredited by reason, which maintain their remnant of authority by its power to give place and title to small men, and to repress thinking men. There was something sweetly simple in the remark of a peer concerning the proposed test of belief in "an Almighty

God." Of what utility is that? Even a heathen believes in that. What we want is belief in the God of this land, the dispenser of rewards and punishments in England. A deity for the heart and reason is not at all involved in this question. It is the God of this land that is important. The God who can make bishops, disfranchise radical constituencies, can make his rewards and punishments felt every day. This is the wheel on which these believers are bound. But around them revolves the wheel of the universe. On that have been broken the gods of Egypt, and the gods of Greece, and the gods of Rome, and of Romanism; and on that will be broken the so-called god of England—an idol crushing not atheism, but theism. Minds that would be free, that would accept truth alone as authority and no authority for truth, should ponder these contemporary lessons. Do not there remain within us all some relics of this outward power which rewards and punishes opinion? If I consider what it is agreeable to believe rather than what is true, I become conscious of a fetter on my thought. Then I no longer possess thought on the subject. If one slip a magnet near the needle of a compass, he can make it point east or south; but it is no longer a compass. If I believe in immortality because I want to believe in it, then, even if immortality be true, it is no truth to me. It becomes a little "god of my land," my idol, as compared with the conviction my neighbour has reached by exercise of his reason.

But, it may be asked, is nothing due to the heart, to feeling and sentiment, in this matter? Shall we not incline to the faith that seems fairest, indulge the hope that appears largest and brightest? To this the right answer were in the spirit of words ascribed to

Jesus : Seek first the higher realm within, its truth and justice, and these other things shall be added. Or, as another sage said : "Follow that which is right, and custom will make it pleasant." It is of the highest importance that we should not adapt truth to our pleasure, but it is a duty to adapt our pleasure to truth. When we rise above considerations of pleasure, which concerns part of a man, to those of true happiness, which concerns the whole man, this conflict between the agreeable and the true disappears. For any large idea of happiness includes the harmony of the intellect with truth. The mind cannot find peace in conscious falsity. Nor can a mind make a thing true by calling it true. Thinkers have been brought to newly-discovered truths by currents not under their control.

Once upon a time, an island sank. It had been built over, and seemed an eternal rock ; but the waves beat through its cliffs and submerged it. The inhabitants got upon a great ship, and voyaged till they came to a coast unknown. Here there was a division. Some resolved to wade ashore. Others, seeing no houses like those of their sunken island, and fearful that the new land would sink like the old, resolved to stay on the ship, sleep there, eat there, live there. They had comfortable berths ; but they were slaves of the vessel, cabin'd, cribbed, confined. Those who went ashore got wet ; they had to sleep on the earth, they ate berries. The people on the vessel conceived hatred of those on shore, and, when these were building new homes, fired on them till their ammunition gave out ; then they raved at them ; but, gradually, when they saw over on the new coast a pleasant little city, they began to feel their tossing

ship uncomfortable ; they found it leaky ; they hoisted signals of distress, and were all brought ashore.

Such has been the situation whenever an old island of faith has sunk—pagan, catholic, puritan. The human mind has voyaged by necessity to the farther truth, but hesitated to land, seeing it so bare and wild. So from sunken dogmas has our age come to the coast of hard fact. Some occupy the old ark, and enjoy the relics saved from the lost island. They have also persuaded themselves that their brothers who have gone ashore have all turned savages. They think those must become wild who have none of the sacred things kept on the vessel—prayer-books, sacraments, crosses ; and that presently they will attack and sink the ship. Therefore they fire on the freethinkers, and curse them. But meanwhile the freethinkers, with solid ground under their feet, know perfectly well that the vessel will go to pieces ; that they must build homes, not only for themselves, but for those now at sea, and for their children. It is their task to build such fair homes and towers and ornaments along Truth's new coast that those victims of the vessel shall be tempted over, freed from their delusion, and bring their treasured relics to adorn the new abodes. But this new coast is the new world of *truth*. The falsities under which the old island sank must not be repeated. Thought cannot afford to tempt the unthinking over by building the same old shrines and spires. At present that is the chief difficulty. They who cling to their bit of the past, despite its rocking, half-wrecked as they are, are still repelled from the shore of freedom because they cannot see there any spire pointing to heaven. On the sunken island heaven was almost their all. So far

as this world was concerned, it was, for the majority, small and barren ; they lived in cells and huts ; but they had fine churches and altars that seemed gates to paradise. They used to say among themselves, " If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable." This also they continue to say on the still smaller vessel. They suppose the new coast to be just as small, barren, unsatisfactory, as their island or vessel ; they do not see that it is a new world with new resources ; and they strain their eyes to see on the new shore just the same old shrines and spires, the same old beliefs and hopes, which they are trying to preserve through the flood of change. But these ancient things they will never find on the new coast. They are irrecoverable. This is the continent of truth we have come to, and only the temples of sincerity can rise on it.

Nevertheless, now that the pioneers have felled the forest, built their homes, ploughed their fields, built the school, the theatre, the law-court, it becomes urgently necessary for them to explore their continent, to find out its resources of beauty as well as utility, to discover what high summits rise about them, and what visions these command. The free-thinker freely concedes that man cannot be satisfied with physical supplies. " Where there is no vision the people perish." He sees with the orthodox that our life is mean and unhappy unless it can expand beyond the limits of time and space occupied by any mortal. The weakness of the orthodox position is that the old vision has gone down, and that what it defends so furiously is a fading afterglow. Who believes in personal immortality ? In words, many ; in reality, few. How do these believers weep and

wail when their dear ones go to the bosom of Jesus ! How hard they try to escape that speculative bliss !

Not long ago I was looking at an ancient Egyptian picture of real life. It represented a procession accompanying the dead body of a man to his tomb. There were bands of music, dancers, people dressed in colours, bearing palm-branches, the dead man's relatives radiant with joy ; for beneath was a tableau of the man and his wife, seated in a pleasure-barge, passing over to the groves of Amenti. Those people really believed in immortality ; they celebrated with festivities the entrance of their beloved into paradise, danced round the dead as if he or she had gained a crown. Where do you find such faith now ? If Christianity offered educated people a genuine conviction of the truth of immortality, one that would make us feel happy in the death of a child or friend, more might be said against disturbers of that creed. As a matter of fact, it is a doctrine much overrated in the imagination, and does not take away the sting of death at all. The ancient faith which made men court death was related to the earthly horrors which made them hate this life ; as the foreground of earth has brightened, the celestial glory beyond has been less radiant ; and now we have come upon a time when thought must consider the basis of the hope that survives, and whether it points to any reality.

The theory of conscious survival after death would seem to have been, in some regions and times, based by man upon his shadow, in others upon his dreams, again upon his visions of his beloved after death—subjective visions which his faith turns to ghosts. In later times some have founded it upon the unity of the individual mind. Only that is observed to perish

which is complex. The combination of elements composing a thing—say a plant—breaks up; the combination dies, but the component elements do not die. The separate atoms are indestructible. They compare the individual consciousness or mind to one of these elements, or to an indivisible atom, and say it is indestructible. But atoms and elements are themselves theories. Were it otherwise, we have not been able to put the mind or consciousness under microscopes fine enough to discover whether it be complex or not. Other bases have been advanced for the doctrine of a future life which carried conviction in their time, but are now known to be untrue, while the doctrine associated with them survives and attaches itself to each new theory. The belief in a future life rests upon something in man—in his sentiment, his longing, his affections, all of which rest fundamentally on his love of life. External nature does not teach the doctrine; but man converts this or that appearance in nature into a symbol of his inner world, and then projects it into the universe.

We have no absolute knowledge of nature. We do not know nature in itself, but only the impression it makes on us. But the impression nature makes on man is variable from age to age, as the mind of the race changes by experience. The phenomena remain; the interpretations differ. And among these phenomena are the mental movements of the race itself. The general belief of races in a life beyond death—recorded in their monuments—does not prove such future life; but it shows that there is something in the universe which naturally produces that impression. Nature and our senses do not deceive us. "When," says Stallo, "the traveller in the

desert sees before him a lake which continually recedes and finally disappears, proving to be the effect of mirage, it is said he is deceived by his senses, inasmuch as the supposed body of water was a mere appearance without reality. But his senses were not deceptive. The lake was as real as the image. The deception lay in the erroneous inferences of the traveller, who did not take into account all the facts, forgetting (or being ignorant of) the refraction of the rays proceeding from the real object, whereby their direction and the apparent position of the object were changed. The true distinction between the Apparent and the Real is that the former is a partial deliverance of sense which is mistaken for the whole deliverance. The deception or illusion results from the circumstance that the senses are not properly and exhaustively interrogated, and that their whole story is not heard " (*Modern Physics*, p. 201). Progress in knowledge is the more full and exhaustive interrogation of our senses concerning the phenomena of which our ancestors were content with fragmentary impressions on which they formed partial judgments. And, as this is equally true of human phenomena, anthropology and historical criticism are necessarily engaged in so dealing with human systems of belief.

Now, it cannot be said that the theory of individual life beyond death is a false interpretation of the phenomena. It can be shown that the various theories as to the conditions of such existence are fictitious. All the Elysian Fields and Gehennas, the Hells and Heavens, have disappeared under criticism into empirical beliefs resting upon local and temporary incidents. But as to the duration of the individual consciousness, science has not been able to give any

negative or affirmative opinion. That which is called the *Ego*, that "I" or "me" which lasts through our changing forms, which identifies me with a child encased in flesh of which no particle remains with me, is something unique in nature. Philosophy has not gone beyond the threshold of its mystery. It seems to be a newborn fact in nature whose future none can prognosticate. Until more is known, none is able to affirm with certainty that it perishes at death. It may be that this conscious *Ego* is a seed destined to germinate in another existence. Who knows? As yet all is speculation beyond the mysterious fact of the conscious and distinct self in each, and the silence of the universe concerning it.

But, assuming that our *Ego* will continue after death, could that alone satisfy those human longings and aspirations which have made men hope for immortality? What men have longed for is not mere duration, but certain things with which they have invested it. Here is one who finds that he must leave life just as he has learned how to live. He hopes the future life will give him another chance at existence, when, with an old head on young shoulders, he will redeem all his lost opportunities. But there is no reason to expect that. Like produces like. If he should wake to another existence, remembering that he had survived death, why should he not, in his increased security, find increased indolence? Why should he not go on neglecting his opportunities there as he neglected them here? It is more probable that the energies needed for this life are stimulated by the prospect of death. Jesus said, "We must work while it is day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work." All the analogies of nature declare that

the opportunities of life cannot be repeated ; and we need not expect men and women to make the most and best of their lives here so long as they defer their work or happiness to another world. But here is a heart which hopes to clasp again its loved and lost in another life. Of all the hopes that cluster around the speculative future, this is the deepest. But love, too, is partly the child of death. Heart clings to heart, hand clasps hand, more passionately because they know that they must presently part. Under that shadow dead love may revive. But were all who have loved, awaking to an endless existence, to remember that they had found out death to be unreal, would the same love revive? Would there be any more the leaning of one on another, as now, amid the darkness? Personal love has always suffered, the human affections been weakened, in the ages when people have been most certain of having another life in which to make up for all sacrifices of them in this life.

But if, on the other hand, one says : " Why should I put forth any energies for an existence so brief as this? Why need I care what comes of it? Why should I love and suffer for man, woman, or child who presently will be torn from me for ever?"—I answer : If you are human, you cannot find happiness otherwise ; if you are brute, no matter. Matthew Arnold has recognised the " Better Part " :—

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare !
" Christ," someone says, " was human as we are.
No judge eyes us from heaven our sin to scan ;
We live no more when we have done our span !"
" Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, " Who can care ?
From sin, which heaven records not, why forbear ?

Live we like brutes, our life without a plan !"
 So answerest thou ; but why not rather say :
 " Hath man no second life ?—*Pitch this one high !*
 Sits there no judge in Heaven our sin to see ?
More strictly than the inward judge obey !
 Was Christ a man like us ? Ah ! let us try
If we then, too, can be such men as he !"

I believe the strongest moral force upon a human being would be to impress on him that principle of Marcus Aurelius—that in a scene of chaos he at least could be himself a source of order. We have read in history of reckless youths sobered by a sceptre placed in their hands ; and in romances of the far West we find pictures drawn from life of rough miners, gamblers, outlaws, who in some emergency, when human destinies fall on their shoulders, rise to the stature of heroes. Something like that sense of responsibility is steadily coming upon the real thought and heart of man in the proportion of his liberation from superstition. Having explored the past upon which he stands, the thinker has found moral government in nature practically limited to man's government ; and this means that each individual can be a force of order and beauty amid the wildness of nature. Whatever power or mind may be in the depths of the universe, it has veiled itself, and not by any glimpse relieved man of his tremendous responsibility of being practically the Providence of this planet. Whatever may come after death, no hint has come from beyond the grave to distract a thinker's eye or purpose from the actual task in hand. In the grandeur of a great past he finds the prophecy of a possibly grander future. From a worm sucking a rock instinct has raised a race of thinkers, and thought in turn may rear a race of gods. When thought is

free to explore the records of the past without prejudice or fear, it tracks the evolution of a human divinity in history; and, so far from despairing of man's future, it sees a potential paradise—where there shall be no more pain, nor sickness, nor wrong, and where even Death may be seen as a friend—the friend that secures our life, ever saying: "Live out all your days, for life will end! Love with full hearts, for hearts must die! Yet know that, as personality ends, life rises above its limitations; and because hearts die their love never decays. The dead take their place in the heart, raised out of all defects, and henceforth they pass on as influences that never end!"

The thinker who is free—free from bonds to traditions unrelated to his life, free from casuistry trying to justify mean surrender to conventionalism, free from rebellion against his reason and his task—need not envy any believer who in his Lord is sleeping, and whose works which follow him will bind others to a system discredited by science. The freethinker also has a Lord in the imperishable life of his species. In that Lord he lives, and his body yields up the spirit of its life to Humanity. His works do follow him. His thought, which appealed to a sure future, is caught up in the great woof of human aspiration, woven into the tissues which shall feed and clothe humanity, developed with growing reason, and made into something far higher than his brain or hand could achieve. He need not dread death. As he lies down in death he may say with the old saint: "If truth live, I live; if justice live, I live; and these by any man's suffering are enlarged and enthroned."

George Eliot gave a gospel to our time in the *Legend of Jubal*. Jubal listens to the ringing hammer

of Tubal Cain. While that hammer is shaping and mastering stubborn metals to use, of its strokes is born a melody in Jubal's ear. In his solitude he invents a lyre—the first rude lyre. With it he brings soothing strains, and sounds for the dance, in the family of Cain. Overjoyed with his success, he goes wandering through the remote world, and carries his new-found art to foreign tribes. Through age after age he wandered—centuries; and then he longed to return home again and mingle with the descendants of Cain. When the aged man approached the familiar scenes of his youth, he found wondrous changes there. Where he had left a few rude homes now stood a beautiful city and shining temple. A joyful procession of young men and maidens was passing, with music not of his rude lyre, but of trumpets, lyres, cymbals, flutes, and psalteries. Such glorious powers had grown out of that lowly lyre he left—which seemed to him a final and perfect thing for the whole world! They all sang in concert, praising one name—and that name was Jubal, the father and god of music. As his rude lyre had flowered to many instruments, so his name had gathered all associations, and become that of a god. The poor old man, in primitive garb, with his long white hair and beard, rushed in among the youths and maidens, crying, “I am Jubal; I made the lyre.” To them he was only a madman. Rebuffed, seized, beaten for blaspheming the god Jubal, the real Jubal fled to the thickets.

The immortal name of Jubal filled the sky,
While Jubal lonely laid him down to die.

But here, in his lonely last hour, a face bent over him, the angel of his loved Past, sustaining him with

the remembrance that it was the very greatness of his heritage that made his outcast age. It was the potential greatness in his gift to man to expand beyond itself and him—the seed that had produced a forest—which made himself so small beside its immortal results.

Much of the desire for continuance of our personality resembles this of Jubal, who would bring his rude lyre, his seedling of Art, to receive the homage and the glory which it can gain only in the immortality of the race. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone ; if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Every true heart, every sound mind, is a living seed. It is not as a safe-kept seed that it can really live. Its death is its liberation. Then, free from stain, its faults forgotten, its limitations passed, all that was vital in it—its aim, its love, its truth—ascend. We are all this moment aided, sustained, enlarged in heart, and made happy in life, by many whose names we know not. For not to the great more than others is this immortal vision given ; it is the assured future life of all who are free—of all who give their best life, their best thought, to the world. How far extends the influence of all pure and simple life and love, weak though it appear ! It may be some child, whose mother clung to it, till it sank in its little grave. The mother bent over its pure face, and it entered her heart. Thenceforth a Madonna was there ; thenceforth a tenderness, a thought, a care, which, passing on from life to life, now makes many a heart more true and tender because that child lived and died.

The child, in its simplicity, is a type of human freedom ; the mother, in her self-forgetful love, is a

type of spiritual freedom. So let us live heart-whole in our thought, our work, childlike in our freedom from anxiety for the future, maternal in our devotion to every cause of truth, manly in our toil for man; and be sure death will be swallowed up in the victory we shall foresee for our race by having already won it in our own lives.

And these men shall forget you. Yea, but we
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
And heaven's high air, august and awful fire,
And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat
But something in it of our blood once shed
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
Blood of men slain, and the old same life's desire
Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet.
Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man!
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day.

THE ARIMATHEAN'S TOMB

THOSE who on Christmas Day, 1879, groped their way through the dark fog into Westminster Abbey, heard from its late Dean a discourse which might be described as a light shining in darkness—a darkness that comprehended it not. The ancient arches were veiled by a canopy of smoke ; the rose windows, the windows passionate with saint and angel, were palled with darkness ; the ghostly choristers sang through a bitumenous cloud the glad tidings of great joy to all men, even as the same tidings were then reaching the heathen through smoke of gunpowder, to be read by the light of their burning kraals. It was a typical day for celebrating the birth of a Prince of Peace whose “religion” was the only one breaking the world’s peace.

As the great Dean spake to his invisible audience, uplifted his fair ideal before dark space, he seemed an emblem of his strange gospel. He declared Christianity to mean moral light, love, humanity, progress ; but the lamp he so held up was his own, and its ray is lost in the proud Christianity which raises itself on crushed humanity, and amid the pauperism and suffering which swell with the swelling wealth and power of the Christ anointed by Law. The Dean, on that Christmas Day, expressed his hope and belief that Christendom is beginning to turn its eyes to the essential part of Christ’s life ;

that the Sea of Galilee is becoming more attractive than either Bethlehem or Calvary. I could not so see it, so heavy was the mist ; but gladly recognised, as one star amid the darkness, the fact that the Church had produced a Dean who believed that the life and thought of Jesus are of more importance than the incidents of his birth or his death.

That is not the Christianity we have been brought up in, and one hears no echoes of it in the sects and Churches of Christendom. In boyhood I used to listen to a favourite hymn of the camp-meetings in Virginia, which now sounds to my ear a chanted fairy-tale.

Christ was born in Bethlehem
(*thrice repeated*)

And in a manger laid.
The Jews crucified him,
And nailed him to a tree.
Joseph begged his body
And laid it in a tomb.
The third day he rose again
To reign at God's right hand.

And so on. No line mentioned that he ever taught by the Sea of Galilee, or preached any Sermon on the Mount. This hymn has often occurred to me as characteristic of nearly all the Christianity I have since encountered. Its interest centres entirely on all that part of Christ's life with which he had nothing to do: his birth, his death, his burial—neither of which was determined by the man himself or represented him—are corner-stones of the faith called after him; they alone are memorialised in holy days. Christianity has lasted all these centuries without anyone proposing a festival of the Sea of Galilee, or a holiday of the Olive Mount. We have not a Golden Rule Wednesday, or a Love-your-Enemies Friday.

The moral life and teachings of Jesus are not distinctive of his or any religion. Other teachers have been good and great; and there is no precept of Jesus in the New Testament that may not be found in the Talmud, the Old Testament, or other Eastern scriptures. So far as it is distinct from other systems, Christianity rests upon three great dogmas—the incarnation, signified by the miraculous birth; the atoning sacrifice, accomplished in the crucifixion; the resurrection from the tomb where he was laid. These are the three great events on which Christianity depends, and without which it would be only another name for moral truths and beliefs in God and immortality common to most religions.

But you will observe that these three fundamental points refer to Jesus in his helpless and passive aspects. When he was a babe; when he was suffering execution; when he was dead. Not what he did, but what was done by others to or upon him, makes all the distinction of Christianity. Those were the three periods when the world had its own way with him; when he could not gainsay or approve; and having made up those points to suit its own notions and purposes, the world is simply selecting, not him, but itself as the source of faith and object of adoration.

These passive periods are known to us only by legend. Christianity is a word unknown to the Bible. Nor could the thing exist so long as it had nothing more to build on than a good man and great teacher. In order to found a strong system it was necessary to make a new Jesus altogether; and it was so impossible to do that from the real conscious words and actions of a radical antagonist of priestly

institutions that a system of that kind had to be established upon inventions concerning his birth and death. The proud powers he had confronted and cowed in life crept back again to their old thrones by re-making him when he could no longer prevent it, preserving only the prestige of his name and his popularity.

If you further consider closely these three great points of the passive Jesus, you will observe that they have a connection. When Jesus was born royal dignitaries pay him homage, either by fear like Herod's, or by gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When he is crucified the representative of Cæsar writes over his head a similar homage to his royalty—Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. And when he dies, Nicodemus, a Master in Israel, embalms him. Thus the homage due to royalty is associated with the birth or incarnation ; with the crucifixion, or official atonement to God, as emperor of the human race ; and with the entombment, amid costly spices, as scene of the triumphant resurrection to be the divine judge of mankind. The seal of royalty is set upon him at each epoch made for him and not by him. And along with the royalty thus claiming him we have the priesthood similarly borrowing his glory. The Magi were royal ambassadors, but they were astrologic priests, diviners, knowing the sign of the star. The sacrificial character of the crucifixion was announced by Caiaphas, the High Priest, for whom a special inspiration on the point is claimed. And, by laying him in his own tomb, Joseph of Arimathea, Counsellor of the Sanhedrim, carried their honour to the tomb of the man they had slain. It is notable that Nicodemus the Ruler and Joseph the Counsellor

—lord temporal and lord spiritual—are both represented in the magnificence of the burial. This is all contrary to probability, but an old order will not give up its patronising connection with grand events on account of improbabilities.

You may have observed how indifferent ecclesiastics are to varying versions of what Jesus taught. The sense of texts may be altered ; moral teachings may be modified ; whole passages of instruction impugned—and little excitement is caused. No man was ever burnt for an opinion about Jesus's teachings. But touch a miracle, question a sign of his royalty, official functions, or sacrificial character, and it is a matter of fire and faggot in one age, and of denunciation in another. It has always been so. The Christian authorities have always virtually said : " Let us make the official, priestly, imperial Christ, and we care not who makes his sermons." Indeed, many of the man's sentiments are even in their way, and they could do as well or better if Jesus had passed straight from his cradle to the cross, performing a few miracles on the way, and from his tomb to his ascension.

I have been interested in a little controversy which occurred recently between a Protestant and Catholic journal. An Irish servant-girl, who had saved up as much as £160 from her wages, gave it all to procure a marble altar for the Catholic church where she attended. A Catholic journal cried : " Where outside the Catholic ranks shall we find such generous faith ?" A Protestant journal retorted : " Where outside of the Catholic Church will you find a religious institution so mean and avaricious as to accept £160, the entire earnings of a poor servant-girl ?" The Catholic journal replied to this as follows :—

“We can only suppose that this rancorous onslaught upon the Church is made in ignorance of what a Catholic altar really is. The altar of the Christian Church is the ark of the new covenant, upon which reposes night and day Almighty God himself. We would, therefore, recommend the author of the above abusive extract to read his Bible..... There he will find most minutely detailed instructions for the preparation of the ark and altar in the Old Testament. In the New Testament he will find recorded the presents made to our divine Lord of gold and frankincense and myrrh by the Magi, and the purchase by St. Joseph of Arimathea of a fine linen winding-sheet, a new sepulchre, and one hundred pounds of costly aromatic spices in which to deposit our Lord's body.....All the majesty, dignity, and costly paraphernalia of our ritual is intended perpetually to encircle the awful mystery of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. Were this not the case, a great deal that is said and done in our churches would be worse than meaningless ; it would entitle us to the accusations of idolatry which Protestants are wont to make against us.”

This is a significant retort, and it cannot be answered on any ordinary Protestant ground. If Jesus be Almighty God, the altar-loving, sacrifice-exacting God of the Bible, the altar is so sacred that the servant-girl is as highly privileged in giving it as she who broke the alabaster box of costly ointment, anointing Jesus for his burial. If the altar is not the abode of God, then every penny spent on it is robbery of the poor for a miserable idolatry. If the human sentiment which would protect a servant-girl's wages from the priest is good for anything at all, it is good

to convert all the fine Protestant churches into means for allaying distress, or promoting the earthly welfare of mankind. That was going farther than the Protestant journalist meant, and he adopted the prudent course of silence.

But we may note in the Catholic's reply the precise spirit in which these legends of royal homage to the infant Jesus, and homage to his dead body, were conceived. They were meant to raise him above the common sentiments and conditions of humanity; to remove his simple radicalism and hatred of priestcraft beyond the interpretations of common sense, envelop them in mystery, and transmit them as the authentic utterances of a God against his personal opponents instead of the voice of a brave reformer swelling other voices in all time against pious cruelty, fraud, and oppression.

The rich and noble Arimathean's tomb in which the dead body of Jesus, embalmed with costly spices, was laid, is of far-reaching significance. It is morally related to the manger in which the helpless babe lay, and the spices to the frankincense and myrrh there offered him when he could not refuse them. They all mean homage to one not existing—the real man not yet consciously living at one time, and having ceased to live at another. Many brave and independent lives are still included with the conventional world at those helpless periods. We were baptised when we could not help it; we renounced the devil and all his works, and took the vows of orthodox faith through vicarious sponsors, when we had no will or reason of our own. Advancing in knowledge and thought, we found those pious swaddling-bands the shroud of our living selves. We burst those

bonds of a gorgeous tomb. We came forth, and are trying to live our own lives, to think our own thoughts. But when we again sink into infant helplessness, or when death comes, the conventional world and creed will again come with its rites, its burial service, to say: "This man is ours. He lived a heretic, but could not die so." Or, if it cannot say that, it will manage to get friends and relatives to bury the thinker's dead body with a Christian service, in order that it may go forth to the world that his testimony was in favour of the conventional system. How many have we known who, from lives of faithful testimony against established error, have gone to their rest beneath its symbols! Their burial is with the rich. The Church rarely refuses to bury such in the odour of sanctity. It is but too glad, if they are respectable and eminent, to gain the prestige of their virtues and talents, and have their epitaphs weigh where their lives did not—on the orthodox side.

This desire to appropriate lives, to have their tombs support error when their protests are forgotten, underlies the strenuous efforts made in all ages to extort from dying freethinkers recantations of their heresies. And often where there has been no recantation invention has come in, when the dead cannot repudiate it, to report some last word favourable to the old system. It is related that Socrates, martyr of a protest against superstition, said as he died: "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?" Did Socrates really utter that last tribute to a popular god? Or was it attributed to him by Æsculapian orthodoxy after he was dead and his statue set up for homage by those who poisoned him? It may be that Socrates had some surviving sentiment

about one fabulous being, the deification of wholeness, of health, and that as he was sinking in death it expressed itself unconsciously. But priestcraft has shown itself so ingenious in inventing fictitious death-beds and dying words for great freethinkers—Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and others—that it might have been equal to the occasion in Socrates' case, and by a dying speech sought to adorn itself with the mantle of his wisdom.

Even were such inventions true, even were any of the alleged death-bed recantations genuine, what would they amount to? So far as the real man and his thought are concerned, they amount to nothing. They would only mean that so long as he was sound he was liberal, when unsound was credulous. Freedom got his health, dogma his disease. Stories of death-bed conversions, says Heine, belong to the department of pathology. "After all, they only prove that it is impossible to convert the freethinkers so long as they move about under God's open sky, in the enjoyment of their healthy senses, and in the full possession of their reasoning faculty."

In France and Italy the freethinkers have so often been humiliated by hearing such tales told of the death-beds of their comrades that they were led to form brotherhoods; and if any one of their fraternity is ill two of his associates station themselves in his house or at his door, night and day, to defend him from the priest, and to witness his words and his death. Since that practice began such legends have nearly ceased in those countries, and they who die in freedom are not buried in Arimathean tombs.

Although, happily, we do not dwell in a land where priests are so obtrusive, it is important that we

should remember this lesson of a great freethinker's life merged in the tomb of conventionality, and the very superstition he resisted raising him from that tomb to be its re-establisher and leader. The hymn says,

'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die;

and, in a sense deeper than it meant, that is true. When a man has spent the main force of his life; when the brain grows feebler, the nerves weaker, the energies not able to keep abreast of advancing inquiry, there is sometimes a tendency to reaction, or at least to nearer conformity with those around. The feeble one desires peace; wishes to please relatives, perhaps consents, for others' sake, to see the parson, and makes the interview as conciliatory as possible. He consents to be buried as his family desire; and that is too generally in a tomb of the Arimathean, which goes on announcing from its false marble lips that he was what he was not, and believed what he believed not.

A true man should do his best to provide against this day of feebleness. "The time shall come," said Jesus to Peter, "when others shall bind and lead thee whither thou wouldst not." Peter became the rock beneath an edifice of fictions. Let the brave liberal of to-day guard his name and tomb, however small and obscure, from such sorry work. And it is not an easy task. The arrangements for human burial are in the hands of a Christian society. Not long ago there died in London a veteran freethinker, an eminent barrister, friend of Leigh Hunt and other literary men of a bygone time, who vainly sought to find a cemetery willing to allow to be set up in it a

justifying the priest and the altar? Didst thou not receive the costly spices of Nicodemus, and lie in the costly tomb of Joseph, and pass to be a prince at God's right hand? Lo, we are doing all this honour and glorification of thee over again!" "Deluded mortals," he must reply, "even an earthly monarch, at all civilised, would despise this flattery and incense. Only a god modelled after some conceited Sultan of savage times could care for your forms, adulations, and ceremonies. Take away these baubles! If any of them can be turned to use, put them up at auction, and give them to the needy, as I would have done with the gold of the Magi if it had not been fabulous, and the spices of my tomb if I had not been dead. Your Christ is one that never existed. Your god is one that does not exist. If he did exist, he would not be even a gentleman, much less a deity, if he would not rather see all these churches turned into soup-houses and schools than remain sucking up the resources of mankind, and equally impoverishing hearts and intellects by their figments of things unknown."

So would Jesus surely say, this day, of all that is founded on that fictitious Christ raised out of the tomb of a Sanhedrim Counsellor, but leaving in that tomb his true humanity, which, indeed, finds still its magnificent tomb in the Christian Church.

Let me warn you, friend, that to you your life is as important as Jesus's life was to him. With the lesson of all the evil that may be built up on the accidents of as good a man as ever lived, you may well study how to secure your life and thought—the best you have, that which will live on and work for ever—from going to prop the errors and evils of the world. The

world regards solemnly a dying testimony. You may not be able to secure your posthumous work entirely ; but you can come very near it by a determined and entire consistency between your practice and your thought. Let there be no division between them. Estimate with care how far and wide by your action to-day you can carry the influence and effect of your principles, and let that action be a thing done, sealed as with your heart's blood, for life, for death, and for that immortality of all human influence which is no speculation, but the inevitable fact of our earthly existence.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL

THE words "Hell" and "Hades" mean the concealed, the invisible ; yet they are the very places with which men would seem to have been most familiar. Long before mankind had explored a quarter of the visible world they possessed complete maps of the world beneath it, reached through the grave. But, though each age has felt infallibly certain of its ordnance map of the realm of the departed, when their several surveys are compared it becomes plain that exploration, discovery, and annexation have gone on actively under the world as on it. Yet, however the rise of new systems of belief have varied or expanded the underworld, or discovered part of it in the sky, pretty much the same old powers have always reigned in such speculative realms. In this the imaginary corresponds with the actual world. No sooner was the New World discovered than the kingdoms of the Old took possession of it ; the flags, institutions, languages of Spain, England, France, appeared beyond the Atlantic. It was said that Christ brought immortality to light ; but there has never been any feature of the Christian Hell and Heaven which is not traceable in the conceptions of so-called paganism. The ancient Romans believed in Paradise, Purgatory, and the place of eternal torment, as really as the Roman Catholic, if less definitely ; and these continue. Though the Protestant may profess to discard

Purgatory, he does not, as anyone will find by asking whether he believes that Socrates is undergoing the same punishment as Judas. The orthodox Protestants leave virtuous pagans, and their unconverted relatives, to what they call "the uncovenanted mercies of God"—a phrase which thinly disguises Purgatory.

It must be said, however, that the Christian paradise was happier than the Elysium it superseded. The prevailing notion of the future life was not very different in Greece and Rome, and, until modified by Judaic-Christian theories, not much brighter than as pictured by the ancient poets. In the *Odyssey* Ulysses relates the story of his visit to Hades. None of the shades, not the virtuous in their meadows of asphodel, spoke well of their abode. His mother's shade drew near, but she could not communicate with him until he gave her some sheep's blood to drink; and then, after he had vainly tried to embrace her, she described herself as fleshless, dream-like, and was only anxious that he should hasten back to the sunlit world. He saw Achilles, in answer to whose gloomy words Ulysses said: "Of old, in the days of thy life, we Argives gave thee one honour with the gods, and now thou art a great man here among the dead. Wherefore let thy death be any grief to thee, Achilles?" But the shade replied: "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, O great Odysseus. Rather would I live upon the earth as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed."

Later Greek authors, influenced probably by Egyptian ideas, conceived a happier future state for the pious; but even Plato's longings were in the

direction of a re-birth of souls on earth, after a certain period. The world was so fair to the Greek that it eclipsed every paradise ; but for expatriated Jews the world was all a dark wilderness enhancing their dreams of future glories. The pallid, senseless ghosts of the Greek underworld were replaced in early Christian faith by belief in "the resurrection of the body," and "the life everlasting" in a renovated and glorified earth, this risen body to be also glorious, like the transfigured body of Christ.

In none of the earlier conceptions is there found the belief that man after death went to heaven. Heaven, with the pagans, was the abode of the gods, and a few favoured mortals with some divine blood in them, like Herakles—whose shade, however, had to remain in the underworld. The first Christians believed that heaven was reserved for God and Christ and the holy angels ; but at the last day there would be let down a heavenly city, a New Jerusalem, which should fill the earth, purified by fire, and of that Christ would be the Lord. Only gradually, as these expected transformations did not take place, was developed the belief that the redeemed were to ascend to the heaven of God and the angels. In that early period, therefore, the arrangements of the underworld were substantially the same in the conception of the Jews, who called it *Sheol*, and of the Greeks, Romans, and Christians, who called it *Hades*. This underworld, to which all went, was divided—vaguely by the Greeks, but sharply by the Jews—into a place of punishment and a place of happiness. This happier region the Jews divided into an upper and a lower, the upper being paradise, where the holiest Israelites might sometimes walk with God, as Enoch and Elias,

or Adam and Eve before their fall, though not regularly dwelling with him in his heaven. This was modified by the Christians into the belief that in their paradise they would permanently dwell with Christ. In our revised New Testament the word "Hell," where it translated "Hades," has been rightly struck out, and Hades restored. Hell is now retained only where it translates "Gehenna," which means the place of torment. In the so-called Apostles' Creed the phrase "he descended into hell" only meant what the American Episcopal Churches generally repeat, "he went into the place of departed spirits." The learned men who inserted that clause in the Creed, in the latter part of the fourth century, did not mean that Jesus suffered infernal torments. But while the learned use words in an old scholastic sense, the people around them often use the same in a vulgar sense. The decline of the Greek and earlier Latin languages had reduced the word "Hades" (hell) to mean currently the region of torment. The doctrine of Christ's descent into hell was based by the Christian Fathers mainly upon two passages attributed to Peter—one in Acts ii. 27, where he quotes from a psalm: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Hades), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"; the other, 1 Peter iii. 19: "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." The doctrine was put in the Creed as an affirmation of Christ's full and complete humanity against certain heretics, who denied that, and maintained that Jesus had no more of humanity than its flesh and blood. We have now reached a period when orthodoxy has quite as much as it can do to maintain the divine nature of Jesus; but just fifteen

centuries ago the Church was quaking under a controversy in which his human nature was challenged. By declaring, in authentic council, that Christ descended into hell, it meant only that he went through the regular processes of defunct humanity. But this controversy and the dogma it affirmed, and the oft-quoted text about his preaching "to the spirits in prison," wrought upon the popular imagination, and resulted in a popular book which professed to give an account of what went on in hell while Jesus was there. This was the Book of Nicodemus of early but unknown date, and much superior to the other Apocryphal Gospels. In this work we find Death personified, while Hades sometimes seems to be a person, but generally a locality with a porter at its gate, its prince being Satan. There is here no trace of any belief that Jesus suffered torments. The whole is aimed to show his victorious prowess, much in the same way that the Greek poets had told of the prowess of Ulysses and Herakles in their descent into Hades ; and possibly it was meant to contrast the heroism of Christ with the timidity which overcame Ulysses at last, when he feared lest the Gorgon's head might be sent from Hades and turn him to stone (*Odyssey* xi. 635). The description in the Book of Nicodemus is graphic. A voice like thunder cries : " Lift up your gates ! " and " the King of Glory entered in form as a man, and all the dark places of Hades were lighted up." And Hades cried : " We are conquered. Woe unto us ! But who art thou that hast such power and privilege ? And what art thou, that comest hither without sin, small in seeming but excelling in power, humble and great, at once servant and master, soldier and king, wielding power over the quick and dead,

nailed to the cross, and destroyer of our power? Surely thou art the Jesus of whom that archsatan Satan said to us that by thy cross and death thou shouldst purchase the universe?" Then the King of Glory, seizing Satan, gave him to be bound "hands and feet, neck and mouth, in irons," and then delivered him to Hades, saying: "Receive and hold him securely until my second advent." Then the King of Glory took Adam by the hand, and, turning to the rest, said: "Come with me, all of you, as many of you as have died by the wood which this man ate of; for lo, I upraise you all by the wood of the cross!" Then he led them all forth. Adam, with exceeding joy, said: "I render thee thanks, O Lord, that thou hast brought me forth from the depths of Hades"; and all the ancient prophets and saints cried: "We thank thee, O Christ, Saviour of the world, that thou hast redeemed our life from corruption." Then Christ made the sign of the cross on their foreheads. And they all passed into Paradise.

You may be curious to know how the writer of the Gospel of Nicodemus learned all this. It will be remembered that it is said that at the crucifixion some who were dead rose from their graves and went into Jerusalem: the events described in hell occurred so speedily that two of these risen ones—Charinus and Lentheus—were able to report the whole story. The paradise into which these ancient Hebrew worthies were led was the same as that described as "Abraham's bosom" in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, separated by a gulf across which one could see the other.

Mr. Keary, in his *Outlines of Primitive Belief*, shows that the Greek traditions of the descent of heroes into hell probably connected even the god

Apollo with such an adventure. "When Apollo had slain the Python, he had to purify himself; and part of his purification consisted in his serving in the stables of Admetus, and in tending his horses on the sides of Pierus. Now Admetus, as Ottfried Müller has shown, is really one of the by-names of Hades; so that Apollo's service in this case is a descent to the underworld. No doubt but that this is some relic of an earlier myth, which gave to the great battle between Apollo and the Serpent a different ending from that now known to us, making the god worsted and not victorious in his fight with the powers of darkness." In the story of Alcestis, Apollo confesses himself unable to rescue her from Hades. The "harrowing of hell" on that occasion was left to the son of a god by a human mother—Herakles; nevertheless, even this hero could not quite escape the clutches of Hades, and, though admitted to Olympus, had to leave his shade below as a pledge. (*Odyssey* xi. 601.) It will be seen, therefore, that, while the descent of Christ into hell fulfilled a rôle assigned by ancient traditions and standards of the divinest heroism, he threw into the shade the achievements of the great pagan figures by his victories over death and hell, his successful return to earth, and ascension to heaven.

Of this Gospel of Nicodemus there was an old English version which was acted on the stage, at Coventry and elsewhere, called *The Harrowing of Hell*. There were throughout Europe many pictures of Christ opening the monstrous jaws of hell with his cross for a spear, and leading forth the prisoners, the gate to paradise being near, the defeated and "harrowed" devils all around. These plays and



pictures did more than anything else to turn the devil from an object of fear to one of ridicule, and the clergy have some cause for their nervous dread of recurrence to plays and pictures of holy things.

Having thus followed the popular development of these notions, we must consider their theological development. The first theory of the Atonement was that the death of Christ alone, the shedding of his blood, was the redemption of mankind. But Justin Martyr, in the second century, says: "The Father willed that his Christ should take upon himself the curses of all for the whole race of men." Irenæus held that the "sufferings" of Christ were necessary for the lawful deliverance of man from his lawful bondage to Satan. The Creator had made the eating of the fruit the condition of transferring to Satan his tenure of the race of Adam; when it was eaten he had pronounced the curse; and a god must stick to his word and bond. Under these circumstances theologians had to devise some theory as to how the bond was satisfied. Some of these theories were rather mean. Thus Gregory of Nyssa (anno 370) says: "Men have come under the dominion of the devil by sin. Jesus offered himself to the devil as the ransom for which he should release all others. The crafty devil assented, because he cared more for the *one* Jesus, who was so much superior to him, than for all the rest. But, notwithstanding his craft, he was deceived, since he could not retain Jesus in his power. It was, as it were, a deception on the part of God that Jesus veiled his divine nature, which the devil would have feared, by means of his humanity, and thus deceived the devil by the appearance of flesh."

The position of Satan was clearly stated in *The Vision of Piers Ploughman*, a fourteenth-century poem in which, hearing that Christ is approaching hell, he says: "If he bereave me of my right, he robbeth me by force; for by right and reason the rooks that are here are mine, body and soul, good and bad; for he himself who is Lord of Hell said that Adam and Eve and all their issue should die with sorrow, and dwell here for ever, if they touched a tree or took thereof an apple. Thus this Lord of Light made such a law, and, since he is so leal a Lord, I believe that he will not deprive us of our right, since he rightly damned them, and since we have been seised of them seven thousand years."

This position was never morally answered. Hell was "harrowed" by mere force. Some flimsy excuse was given, that Satan had lied to Eve; but that had not been made a condition, and the claim of Satan had been recognised as sound up to the time of Christian quibbles. In Goethe's *Faust* the devil insists that Faust shall give him a contract written in blood. His experience of the Christian deity's notions of a word of honour has been such that he cannot trust Christians except in white and red. Under immeasurable heaps of quibbles the old idea of the Atonement, that Christ had ransomed man from the dark and evil powers of nature, was buried away. The scholastic period, the age of "learned doctors"—of Anselm, Abélard, and the rest—arrived: theology and metaphysics joined hands to mystify common sense; and there arose the doctrine that the satisfaction made by Christ was to the divine justice. "Only God could satisfy God." Satan was thus bowed out altogether. But with him all the bravery and glory

of the Descent into Hell faded away. Jesus had nothing to show as his sacrifice for the human race except a few wounds and a swift death. Many a martyr had suffered a hundredfold more than that. But the burning light of the Reformation brought out again, in part at least, the essence of the ancient conception. Latimer in England and Calvin at Geneva declared the doctrine that Jesus had descended into hell for the purpose of being damned ; and so terrible were his sufferings that in three days he endured all the sufferings that the whole human race would have suffered if they had all been tormented in hell for all eternity. Latimer and Calvin had the logic of their principles as well as the courage of their convictions. If the Atonement means anything, it means what Justin Martyr said in the second century, and what these reformers said in the sixteenth—Jesus paid the full penalties of the doom pronounced on man in Eden by suffering every several man's several agonies of everlasting hell-fire. They left it to their successors to determine whether such penalties were more consistently exacted by a god or a devil. And when the last case of blasphemy is decided, the question whether the sufferings of Christ were demanded by deity or devil will speedily be decided by unanimous verdict.

Now that these ancient notions have passed out of human credence—having become, indeed, not merely incredible, but inconceivable—it becomes our duty to study them scientifically, and to discover their relation to our moral and religious development. We have only to place them in their right environment to recognise in them the processes of our own spiritual formation. In the ancient myths of heroic combats

with monsters, founded on the facts of primitive man's struggle with ferocities of nature, we see the turning of man's physical strength to the service of humanity. Though these myths may be expressed and pictured in solar or in supernatural forms, the actual labours of man in subduing his hard world are the soul of them. But the conquest of a difficulty, the slaying of a monster here and there, made little impression upon evil itself. The cloud might vanish, but gathered again; the serpent be slain, but its race continued. Man was forced to include in his theory of the universe a source and principle of evil—an evil deity opposed to the good deity. He could not reach the root of all evils. Having located the good deity in the heavens above him, the dwelling-place of light and starry splendour, he naturally located the evil deity to a dark abode under ground. Death, which parted him from the light and life of earth, seemed to be the hold of the underworld upon him. His hope and prayer through the ages was that the good god would send some good power, who should pass into the underworld and conquer these gloomy powers of pain, disease, and death. Such hopes grew strong whenever a hero was buried; they gave rise to rumours and fables of the struggle of such with Death and Hell; but these turned into poems as the dead heroes gave no sign, and the gloomy Powers still maintained their unbroken sway over the lot of man. Every new religion as it arose was the revival of the ancient hopes around some new figure—Vishnu, Apollo, Herakles, Buddha, Jesus—from whose combat with the King of Terrors victory for man was expected. But Death held them. From his dark abode they returned not; victory was still with the Grave, and

with the evils of which it was chief. The continuance of evil in the earth gradually cast a shadow on the upper gods. It seemed a scandal that those benevolent and omnipotent beings should not save the earth and man : a vast number of them vanished out of human respect and belief under the blows of inevitable atheism, stern portent of failing faith, always so hateful because irresistible as death. At last the gods had to be protected by a theological manifesto to the effect that they could not destroy the evil powers without violating bonds and contracts entered into with them in the beginning of the world. Oaths had been given to pledges that could not be broken. Devils must have their due.

Now that such gods and devils and their contracts are all phantasmal, we may still see those phantoms representing on their mythologic theatre principles indicating the growth of law and justice in the breast of man and in human society. The Descent into Hell of Jesus to fulfil his father's engagement with Satan is a dim and distant prototype of what is going on before us to-day. We have just seen the House of Lords, as a supreme court, allotting justice to the chief atheist of this nation. No doubt they would have done the same justice if it had been Satan himself standing before them, and demanding his strict right from Christ. It is probable that the Lord Chancellor, and the other lords, while they were dealing out to Antichrist his exact legal rights, albeit also an enemy of their own caste and authority, felt somewhat as if they were descending into hell. A lay lord could not repress his pain at what must have seemed to him giving up Christ to the torments of Satan. Something of the same kind is going on in

the House of Commons. That House has been struggling for several years to escape the law which binds it to respect a constitutional election, in a case where a representative of all its majority dreads is brought to its door. But there is no escape. Christianity is established in the law of the land, but only through its contract with the constitutional freedom of the English people. It has only to crush the rights of an English constituency, only to impose a theological test upon the legislators of England, to descend into a Hades from which it will rise no more. Christianity, fancying itself to be "harrowing" infidelity, has already done itself more harm than all the infidels could do it by throwing itself on the side of injustice, oppression of thought, faithlessness to law. It is but natural that, by those who place dogma above justice, the chief atheist should be regarded as a Satan; but he happens to be the momentary test of national loyalty to law, and the more they violate the law in his person the more do they justify his cause against them. It is pretty certain that all men will eventually recognise, what exact thinkers may recognise now, that the power to do justice to an adversary belongs to the essence of civilisation, and is the immediate majesty of Law. If ever the Prime Minister of England deserved to be called a "grand old man," it was when, standing amid jealous enemies and angry supporters, he demanded lawful justice for a wronged legislator of England, though himself the most eminent unprofessional supporter of the faith that wronged legislator assails. The power of his plea lay not in his words or rhetoric, but in his religious resolution to brave the passionate prejudices of the country, and conquer

his own, in order that the law may be carried out. That was a devout Christian's Descent into Hell, though we may hope that the experience he is undergoing of certain tendencies of his own dogmas may lead him to give Freethought its due morally as well as legally.

On the other hand, there is no less necessity that those who oppose the existing order, the established powers, who would abolish or reform them, should give them their due. When we see the House of Lords able to do justice to an adversary of hereditary legislation; when we see many eminent Christian clergymen, and even a chief organ of the Church, insisting upon removing the last dogmatic obstruction from the door of Parliament, it is right that reformers and thinkers should observe and ponder these things, and not be outdone in doing justice. The institutions which have grown up under particular conditions are never ideal, they are generally mingled with much that is evil; but a just man will recognise the good that is in them, and a wise man will know that the evil in them must, in a sense, be propitiated. The "harrowing of hell" may be a popular diversion on the stage, but when the mystery play is left for the mysterious reality of evil in the universe it is the part of wisdom to deal with calmness as well as courage, justice as well as sentiment, with the evils around us. West Indian slavery was a great wrong, but England never did a juster or wiser thing than when it paid the masters for the slaves it liberated.

The great question which lies before England in the near future is the Established Church, how it and its vast resources are to be dealt with. The Liberation Society proposes merely to sunder it from the State,

but does not clearly tell us what is to be done with its vast endowments. Freethinkers generally, I suppose, are in favour of separating Church and State and secularising the endowments. Whether that were a good thing to be done depends upon what is meant by "secularisation." If it means devoting the wealth of the Church to ordinary charities, or to institutions either educational or benevolent, I, for one, should oppose it. This vast wealth has been bequeathed by the past for the spiritual culture of the nation, and for that it should be considered entailed and devoted. As the endowments of the Roman Catholic Church passed to the English Church, so will those of the existing Church pass to the Church of science, thought, and freedom. It seems to me just a case in which the reformer should have patience and sufferance. It may not be easy; it is painful enough to see a great machinery for the diffusion of superstition in full operation; and just now, when thousands of clergymen have petitioned against a measure of civil justice, it may be particularly hard to repress the indignation that would break in pieces the whole concern as a vessel of dishonour. But the wrath of the hour should be restrained by the instruction of the ages. How many errors, how many superstitions, have vanished away! Consider these ancient fantastic notions about God, and his contract with the Devil for the souls of mankind, and his devices to escape from his hasty word, and the "harrowing of hell": how utterly have they sunk, trampled in the mire, and the mire gone off in dust! Even so shall perish the dogmas that have succeeded them, and none are doing more to trample them into mud than those who are using them for fanatical purposes, or for the schemes of partisan

warfare. It is not a few freethinkers stung to "blasphemy," it is not logicians or men of science, who chiefly destroy surviving superstitions and creeds discredited by reason, but those who make the creeds discreditable, who show the superstitions double-tongued and venomous, worshipping a God crucified for "blasphemy," and crucifying all who like him oppose the established gods—it is these who revolutionise systems and grind dogmas to powder.

Let us be patient and of good courage. Though to our view of what is right and reasonable the established superstitions and dogmas be an intellectual hell, yet were it best to accept our necessary descent into it, to fulfil our obligations to those who maintain it is heaven, to respect them while we demonstrate their delusion, in nothing to fail of fairness and charity, magnanimity and truth. We will remember the words of the greatest Englishman, "Let gentleness my strong enforcement be"; we will not forget the reminder of the greatest German, that evil spirits are most effectually harrowed by roses. However long national emancipation may have to wait, the individual free heart and mind shall in every place and every moment dwell in that happy realm that cometh not by observation, but is within.



ORTHODOX UNBELIEF AND UNBELIEV- ING ORTHODOXY

IN Lucian's dialogue entitled *Zeus Tragoedus* it is represented that the gods one day found their Chief in a dejected state of mind, and, on inquiring the reason, were informed that he had been listening to a debate in Athens, between Damis and Timocles, on the question whether they, the gods, really existed. The debate had been adjourned, but Zeus felt bound to admit that Damis, who said their existence is not proven, had the best of the argument so far, and the best of the audience were on his side. If it went on that way, he said, their altars would be neglected, their temples abandoned, and the gods be no more than idle phantoms seated in the clouds. The gods then discuss the matter, and Momus says plainly he does not wonder that the human race is growing sceptical, since they, the gods, have left things without any direction on earth—bad men ruling, the good crushed—careless if only sacrifices enough were laid on their altars. Momus is rebuked and silenced, and ultimately the gods repair invisibly to Athens and hear the conclusion of the debate. When they reach the hall a quarrel among their invisible selves about precedence in entering occurs, and it is decided that the gods who have the costliest statues shall have the higher rank. Those who have golden statues enter first. The debate begins. Timocles at first refuses

to give reasons to an unbelieving wretch, but presently argues the existence of gods from the order of nature. Damis replies that this begs the question. "What is, is. That it has been so ordered by providence is no sure conclusion." Timocles says it is admitted that Homer is the first of poets, and Homer believed in the gods. Damis then quotes from Homer stories about the gods, making them so absurd that the audience cheer. Timocles trembles, but asks whether the multitudes of men and nations who have believed in the gods have all been deceived. Damis replies that the different races worship different gods—sun, moon, bull, cat, dog, ape, onion—and they cannot all be right. Timocles declares that such shocking doctrines will destroy all the temples. Damis says the false ought to be destroyed; the true are in no danger. Timocles affirms that because there are altars there must be gods. Damis smiles at this, and tells Timocles that he has taken refuge at the altar as men do in extremities.

Timocles had begun the debate by abusing Damis and calling on the people to stone the blasphemer. At that point Zeus had some hopes, and whispered to the other invisible ones: "Our man is doing well. He has the rudest manner and the loudest voice. Well done, Timocles! give him hard words. That is your strong point. Begin to reason, and you will be dumb as a fish." Damis had replied to the abuse: "Why inflame the people against me, Timocles? The gods show no displeasure. They have heard me (if hear they do) without interposing. Why should you be so fierce in their behalf?" But the sympathy of the audience is with Damis, and the defender of the gods had to

suspend his vituperation, and offer the arguments so easily disposed of. But when he argues that because there are altars there must be gods, and Damis smiles, Timocles goes back to what Zeus declared his strong point—hard words. “Oh, oh, you are sarcastic are you! you gravedigger! you wretch! you abomination! you gaol-bird! you cesspool! We know where you came from: your mother was a harlot; you killed your brother, and seduced your friend’s wife; you are an adulterer, a sodomite, a glutton, a beast. Stay till I can thrash you. Stay, I say, villain, abhorred villain!”

Damis goes off laughing. Timocles follows railing and throwing tiles at him. So ended the debate. Zeus asks the gods: “Well, what are we to do?” Hermes replies: “The old play says, you are not hurt if you don’t acknowledge it. Suppose a few people have gone away believing in Damis, what then? A great many more believe the reverse; the whole mass of uneducated Greeks and the barbarians everywhere.” “True, Hermes,” returns Zeus, “but that was a good thing which Darius said about Zopyrus: ‘I had rather have one Zopyrus than a thousand Babylons.’”¹

Sixteen centuries have elapsed since that was written. It is now recognised as the perfect picture of the breaking up of a great sacerdotal system. Yet how modern it all is! The late Professor Clifford, while on his death-bed, imagined and related to me a dialogue somewhat of the same character between divine personages now supposed to be directing the affairs of the world. In truth,

¹ Froude’s *Short Studies* (third series).

there is no feature of Lucian's moral epoch wanting in our own. Like his gods, ours take precedence according to the value of their images. The god of the Established Church ranks highest because he is golden ; the Dissenters' god, the Unitarian god, the Jewish god, find respect in the order of the wealth of their worshippers. No argument to prove their existence is ever used newer than those which were used, and broke down, sixteen centuries ago. And, finally, we have reached the period when the conventionalised deities and the dogmas excite ridicule. And ridicule is answered by rage. When discussion becomes an interchange of satire and vituperation, it is plain that what they are dealing with is not religion ; it may be some portion of its threadbare cast-off raiment, but, whatever it may be, or pretend to be, it is not religion. Nobody ever ridicules religion ; religion never hates or abuses anybody. It is only somebody's notion about religion which can be ridiculed, and everybody laughs at notions other than his own. Lucian laughed at the growing superstitions of the Christians and the declining superstitions of the "pagans." In our Christian universities they leave out the former, but relish the latter ; for they know very well that religion was not involved in the decline of Olympian deities. Who ever warns a child that he must skip over Bunyan's humorous picture of the crazy, toothless giants Pope and Pagan ? Who objects to Elijah's ridicule of the god of Baalites ? The devoutest men are not sensitive under ridicule of any deity but their own. The Rev. Mr. Shoolbred lately related his visit to a temple of Kali in India, and how he pulled the goddess's nose, saying to the amazed natives : "Now, if she is a

deity, why does she not strike me dead for such an indignity?" Possibly the Rev. Mr. Shoolbred is at this moment horrifying his Baptist congregation with the immortal myth of the English infidel taking out his watch and giving Jehovah five minutes to strike him dead. Timocles was equally scandalised when Damis asked him why the gods did not interpose to prevent denials of their existence, and Christians can see that as a reasonable test for Jupiter. But it doesn't apply to Jehovah! A story is going the rounds of our pious Press that an infidel lecturer asked his audience, "If there be a god, why does he not strike me down for my opinions?" Upon which a pious Scotchman started forward and exclaimed, "His servant will do it for him," and knocked the lecturer down. The adoption of the story by certain orthodox journals excites the suspicion that, if they had been at the debate in Athens, they would have joined Timocles in throwing tiles at Damis for the sake of Zeus, who would not or could not use his thunderbolts, as he was so ready to do in the stories of mythology.

It is clear that the increasing wrath of the orthodox towards heretics, their irritation under ridicule of their dogmas, are due to a growing scepticism in their own minds. They believe in the value of their churches, chapels, altars, parsonages, livings; but do they believe in an Almighty God who cares for these things, who can and will protect them, who reigns over the world, and holds its tribes in the hollow of his hand? If they believe that, why all this rage? why this anxiety? Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

It has almost become a proverb that the age of

miracles is past, and many people suppose that it is a very long time since orthodox people believed that miracles might and did occur around them. But two hundred years ago a man who had denied contemporary miracles would have been handled almost as roughly as an atheist. Only one hundred and fifty-six years ago a woman was burnt in this country for witchcraft; and only one hundred and ten years ago the divines of the Associated Presbytery passed a resolution declaring their belief in witchcraft, and deploring the general scepticism on the subject. Belief in providential miracles was orthodox in the earlier part of our own century. It disappeared only after a stormy struggle, and then only to lurk in many popular superstitions, and to recur occasionally in such movements as spiritualism. The departure out of respectable orthodoxy of the belief in modern miracles was a much longer stride towards radical unbelief than theologians are willing to admit. Its results have only in these last years begun to make themselves apparent. A Christianity whose deity does not interfere with the laws of nature or with the government of the world is only a kind of deism. It may claim that once upon a time he did interpose in human affairs, eighteen centuries ago, and that after the lapse of further centuries he will interpose again; but none the less are men in the present time left to administer their world without divine interference. That is now orthodoxy, but it is unbelief. It is contrary to the faith of the Bible, contrary to Christ's alleged promise of continued miraculous power to his Church. And this unbelief is only bearing its fruits in the wrath and denunciation with which orthodoxy is compelled to defend the faith

and the altar which its deity abandons to their fate.

Listening in Parliament lately [1883] to the defence by certain gentlemen of the oath from profanation, I could hear the accent of atheism in every word they said. It was because the words of the oath were to them unreal ; because they did not believe that either its violation or profanation would bring down any retribution from heaven ; that they were impelled to assume the *rôle* of ancient Almightyness themselves and hurl on the heretic the thunderbolts left by their departed deity. The new persecution may be characterised as the anger of unbelief. There have been persecutions in the past, but they were in obedience to scriptural injunctions and codes firmly believed. And in none of the religious scriptures of the world would you be likely to find any provision for punishing atheism. David seems to have thought a man a fool who said there is no God, but I doubt if there be any reproach cast on intellectual atheism in the Bible ; and certainly Jesus never uttered any unkind word against the Sadducees for denying the future life. He reserved his fulminations for the Pharisees, the extreme orthodox party of his time. Our time has originated a new persecution for an offence unprovided for in the Bible. Denial of the existence of God is regarded as worse than immorality. Why is that ? Who has informed the world that God objects to having his existence denied ? Where is the revelation of God's sensitiveness about the recognition of his existence ? I suspect that, if you could get at the root of this strange development of orthodoxy, you would find it fixed in the modern formation of unbelief. It cannot be imagined that the existence

of God depends on whether men believe it or not, or that his happiness can be affected by the disbelief of men. But there are many human institutions and interests of a social, political, and pecuniary kind which have the name of God in their titles, and seem to rest upon his genuineness. If there is no God such as is therein described, they might look absurd, and their authority might be questioned. But if philosophers and scientists can give no evidence of such an existence; if the deity himself remains sublimely silent and indifferent, making no sign to certify his existence or guard his institutions; what is to be done? Nothing but to make it so uncomfortable for a man to deny the divine existence that the battalions will always be on God's side, whether he be on the side of the battalions or not. No age that really believed in a deity ever dreamed of protecting his abstract personality from denial. That is the product of a profound inward misgiving that the denial may be true, and if not suppressed may prevail.

And this orthodox unbelief betrays itself also in the notable disregard of the moral laws ascribed to the deity by those most interested and vehement in maintaining the popular belief in his existence. If our fierce defenders of the faith really believed in the God and Christ formulated in their theology, would they disregard their commands, even for the sake of injuring an unbeliever? Would they bear false witness against their neighbour, even if he be an infidel? Would they call down fire from heaven against those who follow not after Christ? Would they be unmerciful, unjust, cruel, abusive, or tear men from their families and send them to prison, in

the name of him who said "Bless them that curse you"? All this we have lately seen and heard again and again. If there be any truth in the Sermon on the Mount, all the verbal blasphemies ever penned are not so wicked, not so vile, gross, and licentious, as to imprison men for any abstract opinion whatever, in whatever coarse form expressed. Even obscene language is decent beside the real indecency of taking an honest man by the throat and casting him in gaol for a year, or ejecting him from his lawful seat in Parliament. No man who really believed in Christ would do any such thing as that. It is the work of reckless unbelief, panic-stricken with alarm for the security of its vulgar material interests.

But now I have something to say of unbelieving orthodoxy, or the orthodoxy that survives among unbelievers in Christianity. I must guard myself from being supposed to refer to any particular person or association. Nor do I refer to ridicule; for I believe it impossible for the superstitions of antiquity to masquerade in the modern world without exciting laughter, and sometimes coarse jests. What I mean by the survival of orthodoxy in unbelievers is the disposition sometimes shown to hate and wage war of mere extermination against the gods of the land, their temples and the institutions they consecrate. When Christianity confronted the temples and arts of Greece, it was only to see Antichrist in every shrine, a devil in every bright statue. To hate them, destroy them, pulverise them, was to do God service. That is what I call orthodoxy. But what would not the artistic works, the relics, the books which Christian orthodoxy destroyed—what would they not be worth to-day? Jesus might say he came not to destroy,

and Paul might stand on Mars Hill and recognise the religion represented in their altars to forgotten gods ; but Jesus and Paul were not Christians, they were poets and saviours of men, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free. When their small movement gained a giant's strength it used it like a giant, and a great deal of the beauty of the world was destroyed. It may appear to some absurd to suppose that what is called the Freethought movement will acquire any such strength as that ; but I feel certain that it will, and some of you may live to witness its day of supremacy. It is to be hoped that day will not be a day of wrath, but it is not so certain. The havoc which Puritanism wrought amid the arts and relics of the country has not yet been recovered from, and there is a great deal of the Puritan in many an English and Scotch Freethinker. The arrogant orthodoxy of the country, with cynical disregard of all interests but its own, seems bent on obstructing everything that would refine the masses and give them some interest in the art-institutions of the country. The division on the Sunday openings resolution in the House of Lords shows the whole bench of bishops standing like a special police in front of the museums and art-galleries to drive the people away and leave them no resource but the public-houses. All those people are potential Free-thinkers ; what will they know of the value of the antiquities and ornaments of the country ? The orthodoxy of the country seems intent on lashing its opponents into an enmity that bodes no good for the common weal. There is no meanness to which it will not descend. It has brought pressure even upon the University College of London, the college

associated with Bentham and Mill and Grote, whose council has just refused to admit two ladies to a botany class, open to others of their sex, because of their connection with the movement of Freethought. Having imposed a theological test on Parliament, orthodoxy now imposes one on the once freest college in the country. That such things must kindle resentment is inevitable ; that persecution must eventually pay penalties therefor is certain. But it is to be hoped that orthodoxy will never be fought with orthodoxy. For orthodoxy is not a particular set of views, but a temper ; it was the temper of those who knelt before their gods and poisoned Socrates, of those who knelt before their gods and slew Jesus, as of those Christians who kneel before their gods and poison and crucify the Freethinkers of our time, as far as the laws permit. I do not counsel that Freethinkers shall consent to be meek and passive victims of such wrongs. But I believe that their weapons of defence should be taken from the armoury of civilisation and humanity. Two hundred and sixty-one years ago this day (May 13th) the first newspaper appeared in this country : despite every effort to keep it the private circular of the rich or liveried flunkey of privilege, the Press has become for the millions the daily photograph of the daily world. The eyes of humanity are now in every place, and every wrong is known and searched out. If the Freethinker is free from the orthodox superstition that the world is naturally depraved, he will know that he is surrounded by a tribunal of honest hearts and healthy instincts. The masses are ignorant and prejudiced ; but they are fundamentally just, and they have only really to know the true and right thing to stand by it.

Whatever misleaders of the people may say, the masses of this nation are opposed to the oppression of conscience or punishment of opinion. Everything goes to show that ere long there will be brought before the people of this country a square issue between the rights of thought and conscience and the privileges of orthodoxy. It is pretty clear that the next election in this country will have to be largely fought on that issue. Orthodoxy will, of course, try and confuse the issue by awakening prejudice against particular persons and by slanders; but that will only be a confession of its inadequacy for any fair encounter with the principle of perfect freedom. What is most needed is that intellectual liberty shall not employ the like weapons, and that it shall not seek any mere retaliation, nor merely to sound a pæan of victory. That is the orthodox way. That is the tradition of the Church militant. We want no Freethinkers' Salvation Army encountering the Skeleton Armies of Dogma throughout the country. The great cause is not a Freethinkers' cause, but an English cause, a human cause, and its victory will be as much that of the orthodox as of the unorthodox. The orthodox may provide a hell for the Freethinker, but if he return the compliment, in so far is he orthodox. Most of us, perhaps, are conscious of a survival of the old temper, when in a law court persecution is dismissed with costs. The Freethinker, on one or two recent occasions, might understand the old doctrine that part of the bliss of the saved would consist in hearing the groans of the damned. But the great victories of truth and freedom in the world are victories for all. "They who are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick"; and of all men the

most needy invalid is that man who has caught orthodoxy so badly that he is possessed with a desire to injure everybody who has not the same disease. The great mission of Freethought is to save that man, to restore him to health ; and Freethought can afford to be patient with him.

It can afford it in this country especially, because really the constitution and laws are far more on the side of science than of superstition, far more on the side of freedom than oppression of thought. The laws that vex the Freethinker are very few and nearly obsolete ; it is only in exceptional circumstances that they can be put in motion at all, and even then they tell more in favour of freedom than of orthodoxy. The recent prosecutions for blasphemy were the means of distributing through every journal in the country the unorthodox opinions of our great men, before buried in costly volumes. The daily papers became for a time Freethought tracts ; and a decision was gained from the Lord Chief Justice of England that the publication of views contrary to Christianity and Theism is perfectly legal. Persecutors may fancy that the people who have made the law grow to that extent will agree to have its fair fruit forbidden, but they will find themselves mistaken. The people may be deceived temporarily in this or that particular case, but they really mean to defend freedom of thought and utterance ; they are against oppression ; and the Freethinker, feeling around him the strong arms of all freemen, can afford to pity the fanatic foaming at the mouth in his war against fate that can never be won.

There is another consideration to be taken to heart. The orthodox man has more excuse for fearing the

Freethinker than the Freethinker for fearing the orthodox. Most of us have been orthodox once, and we know how much good feeling may be consistent with orthodoxy. We know how the orthodox man feels. A good many of us know how deep it strikes when one comes in contact with a thinker or a book which cuts from under one's feet the ground he thought solid. I remember that the first time I heard Theodore Parker preach I went away saying I would never listen to that man again; and I did not listen to him again—for three weeks. But while we have been orthodox, the orthodox man has never been a Freethinker; he doesn't know how much good, how much principle, is consistent with Freethought. We have been where he is, but he has never been where we are; there we have him at a disadvantage, and can be more just to him than he is to us. And that is one more reason why the temper of orthodoxy is quite out of place in the ranks of the emancipated. In fact, so long as we preserve any trace of that temper which was forged amid fears of hell and priestly terrorism, we are not quite free; we are not so lifted up to the height of our cause as to draw men unto us.

But now, in conclusion, I have something to say of the orthodox believers. They are not the majority of professing Christians; if they were, we should never witness the infidelity of intolerance, the blasphemy of persecution. But they are a large minority, and every step in the advance of freedom has been taken by their aid. By calling them orthodox believers I do not mean that they are believers in orthodoxy as you and I may understand it. I do not mean that they are consistent Christians as those understand Christianity who place the human religion

above it. All that is largely a matter of terms, a question of exact or inexact thinking. But they of whom I speak are real believers in a God and a Christ embodying their highest moral and spiritual conceptions, and they would scorn to do an injustice in their name, or imagine they could do such beings service by any carnal weapon. They desire no sectarian victory, no coerced conformity, but that mankind should have the strength and comfort of genuine, loving belief in divine providence and immortality. They dread the removal of such beliefs, because conceiving them essential to human welfare and happiness; but they show their sympathy with humanity to be the essence of their love for Christ. While I cannot believe that Christianity really means or can mean that divinity of humanity which was expressed in Christ, and in all the human-hearted deities and saviours of ancient belief, these men appear to me far nearer Jesus both in heart and in the idea he represented than the defenders of creeds of which he never heard, or of an authority like that he refused to obey. It is idle to think that real free thought—that is, the thinking that is not prescribed by authority—can secure its rights and essential conditions except by the aid of these true orthodox believers. The majority of the masses of a country will never be able to keep step with the advance of its leading minds. They will follow, but always at some distance. We need never expect, even if we could wish, a nation without diversities of opinion and belief. What we require is a country in which we may freely differ, in which truth and error may have that free and fair intellectual encounter of which truthful men are never afraid. We already nearly

have such freedom, though eternal vigilance is the cost of keeping it. But let it not be supposed that such freedom has been won or preserved solely by those called Freethinkers. Many earnest believers, among those called Christians, have lived and suffered and died to secure and maintain our religious freedom. Many such are working for the same high purpose to-day. And although Freethinkers may sometimes think that, as Christians, such cannot with consistency be champions of liberty, and though the more rigidly orthodox may say the same thing, yet, if their case be carefully examined, it will be seen that they are the more real believers in Jesus and in the Father whom they declare one with Jesus. There is much in the New Testament to bind a believer in it to the Freethinker of to-day. That book contains the record of a progressive movement. It reports the words and deeds of men who were leaving an established for an unestablished faith, abandoning a time-honoured orthodoxy for an abhorred heresy. Their leader was tried and executed. The inspiration of the New Testament is the freedom of heart, mind, spirit which these men claimed, exercised, and suffered for; and, whatever may be said of the new views they adopted, there can be no doubt that their moral attitude towards the authority and orthodoxy of their time was much the same as that of the Freethinkers of our time. Those men who in our day have given Westminster Abbey a new consecration—such as the late Dean and the present Dean—those Congregationalists who lately in a body demanded freedom of the House of Commons from every religious test, may be charged by so-called evangelicals with lax faith; but they, and we, may rightly

return upon persecutors the charge of an unbelief disguised in sectarian pride. Jesus asked the people around him, "Why of your own selves judge ye not what is right?" Do they believe that? If so, why prevent people to-day from judging of their own selves what is right? Jesus said, imitate the infidel Samaritan, who binds up the wounds of man, rather than the orthodox Levite who passes them by. If they believe that, why do they prefer inflictors of wounds, to say nothing of the modern Levite who cares not for them, and hate the secularist Samaritan whose whole religion is to heal the wounds of humanity? The New Testament bids men return good for evil, follow not the traditions of men, call no man master, accept new truth though it contradict what was said by them of old time; and if these zealous Christians believe all that, by what right do they try to coerce thought, to bind men to traditions, to set mastery over their minds, to imprison them for following, according to their light, what seems to them new truth? Is it not plain that if they had been in ancient Jerusalem they would have been partakers with them that stoned the prophets and the great heretic whose golden image they now worship? Had their spirit prevailed, there never would have been any success to that new cause, nor to any other that did not merely fortify the dogmas and traditions of the past. That is orthodox unbelief. The true belief, though calling itself orthodox and Christian, is that which follows the free spirit that Jesus followed, and with such reality of faith that it will not fear nor disown that freedom, though it shield and shelter its opponents. And it will be an illiberal liberalism, an orthodoxy of Freethought, which should prevent a

full heart-union with all such true believers, amid whatever differences of word and work. The spirit of freedom, not its letter, is the saviour of the world ; that will live after all our opinions are fossil remains ; and if where any Lord is there is liberty, we will not allow antiquated vesture to hide from us his transfiguration in the light of the world.

THE SCAPEGOAT

HOLMAN HUNT has painted a picture of "The Scapegoat." The poor animal is seen far away in the desert, the very type of misery, amid utter desolation. Its bones are almost visible ; it is famished ; there is not one green herb, not a blade of grass, not a drop of water, in all the waste of arid sands. The sky is as brass above it ; the desert as a furnace beneath it ; it stands with starting eye, as if longing for the one friend of the friendless—Death. On that wretched creature the Israelites have, with solemn ceremonies, heaped their sins, driven him into the wilderness, as a propitiation of the desert-deity, that he may have something to vent his cruelty upon and not afflict them. The miserable animal in the picture has the very look of being loaded with human guilt.

And in some sense this is true. He is burthened with the weight of some of the meanest and basest qualities possible to human nature. There is on him man's grovelling superstition which conjures a phantom of his own cowardice and cruelty amid the barrenness he has not energy to conquer. There is on him man's vile selfishness which desires another to suffer for his own sin. There is on that scapegoat man's contemptible ignorance which fancies that his wickedness may be divided, leaving its pleasures to himself, its penalties to another. But, so far as guilt is concerned, they who drove out the

goat to perish in the desert only added one more to their sins, and, sending away their innocence on an innocent creature, took all that was low or foul about it on themselves.

The tortured scapegoat has been terribly avenged. The tribe that offered that sacrifice to a desert demon, in the end became itself a scapegoat. Christendom borrowed from their Bible that barbarous leaf, and, offering up to their god a spotless lamb, offered up the Jewish tribe to the demon derived from the Jews. For many centuries every Christian believed that injury to a Jew was service to God. Millions on millions, who had no other merit, felt it counted to them for righteousness that they helped to make earth a desert for those who had slain their god. The Jewish expiation of having taught Western barbarians their dark and deadly superstition of vicarious suffering has hardly ended anywhere, and in some parts of the Continent it seems to become more fearful than ever. In the trial of certain Jews in Hungary for having sacrificed a Christian child in their ceremonies we have seen a tableau more weird than might have been thought possible in the nineteenth century. A little boy has been put forward to make this blood-accusation against his own father. How many times has that boy heard it told in the family, in the synagogue, that the Father of their Tribe showed his faithfulness to God by offering to slay his own son ! But here we have Isaac sacrificing Abraham, and sacrificing him in the old abject spirit of fear to an omnipotent Jahvé of Christian hatred. The accusation is absurdly unfounded ; there is even no proof that the alleged victim is dead at all. All sacerdotal systems have been guilty of human

sacrifices, and there are no reasons for supposing that they lasted longer among the Jews than the Christians, whose creed rests upon a great human sacrifice. There are many stories of solemn human sacrifices by mediæval Christians. The church in Iona is said to have been founded by a human sacrifice, and there is a suspicious story of the kind in the Lives of St. Patrick. Nevertheless, the book of Exodus contains the provision, "the first-born of thy sons thou shalt give unto me," a redemption-fee of what would now be twelve shillings being allowed, at what period is not known. Christians equally with Jews acknowledge the divine authority of this law, but they claim that their sins were laid upon Christ, and he was so great a being that he redeemed man by his sacrifice of himself as first-born of Jahvé. And these Christians cannot see why the Jews, who reject this great commutation of sacrifices, should not go on fulfilling the old provision. They may redeem their own firstborn, but are suspected of wishing to sacrifice children who are not redeemed. You perceive that there is a good deal of mental confusion in these Christians. If the Jews sacrificed children, it could only be because Jahvé so commanded in the Bible. Then why do they not raise a blood-accusation against their "Jehovah"? Why worship in him what they abhor in their imaginary Jew? It is orthodox and convenient to maintain that Jahvé is god, the Bible his word; but as there is a good deal of barbarism in both, somebody is wanted to hate for it, and the Jew is made by the Christian the scapegoat for the blood-thirstiness of their common deity.¹

¹ 1907. Since this lecture was written (1883) I have studied further the "blood-ritual" accusation. It seems to have been a Roman

The idea of the scapegoat remains in the East. Bruce describes an experience at Mecca as follows : " We found that, upon some discussion, the garrison and townsmen had been fighting for several days, in which disorders the greatest part of the ammunition in the town had been expended ; but it had since been agreed on by the old men of both parties that nobody had been to blame on either side, but the whole wrong was the work of a camel. A camel, therefore, was seized, and brought without the town, and there, a number on both sides having met, they upbraided the camel with everything that had been either said or done. The camel had killed men ; he had threatened to burn the Aga's house, and the castle ; he had cursed the Grand Signior and the Sheriffe of Mecca (the sovereigns of the two parties) ; and, the only thing the poor animal was interested in, he had threatened to destroy the wheat that was going to Mecca. After having spent great part of the afternoon in upbraiding the camel, whose measure of iniquity it seems was near full, each man thrust him through with a lance, devoting him *diis manibus et diris*, by a kind of prayer, and with a thousand curses on his head. After which every man retired, fully satisfied as to the wrongs he had received from the camel."

In Moslem regions, as we have lately seen, the victim loaded with the sins of others is not always a goat or a camel. When poor Suleiman Sami was on trial for the massacres of Alexandria the evidence against him was flimsy enough, but the public

(Gentile) accusation, not against the Jews, but against the Christians, on account of their secret flesh-and-blood sacrament. When the Christians reached power it was easy to pass the accusation on to the Jews.

prosecutor demanded his execution because it would be some satisfaction to those who had lost property or friends by the Egyptian disorders. It did not occur to him that anybody could care whether the wrong man were hanged, provided somebody was hanged. The English Government managed to save Arabi from being the scapegoat, but they had to give up Suleiman, no doubt equally innocent. Possibly the poor people over there may have some notion that if Allah doesn't interfere the executed man must be the guilty one, and thus other parties are relieved of suspicion by his death. However this may be, the whole thing was disgraceful, and it could not have occurred if comparatively civilised countries were not bound by that sacrificial superstition which corrupts the fountain of justice. So long as the established "religion" of the powers that rule the world consecrates the guilty fantasy that a bad man's sin may be redeemed by an innocent man's punishment, any general education in the principles of justice is impossible.

And just here lies the root of the poisonous tree. The Eastern idea of the scapegoat is a logical and legitimate part of the whole system of sacrificial religion. If, with our ideas of humanity to the brute creation, we could put ourselves back into antiquity, and converse with that Israelite appointed to lead the scapegoat into the desert, he might be able to show some cause for his faith that the animal was bearing away the sins of his tribe, and averting the divine wrath. We might argue the absurdity of supposing that a man's inward guilt could be transferred to a creature that did not commit the offence. But he would tell you rightly that it was not with their

inward guilt that the animal was loaded, not with their crimes and immoralities. Jewish law did not admit that offences against man could be purged that way. He would tell you that the animal was loaded with vague sins against Jahvé of which man was not conscious; that Jahvé had surrounded men with a vast and complex system of regulations and obligations unrelated to their moral sense, that the sins of their non-fulfilment in every particular were imputed to them just as they were imputing them to the goat. They were really as innocent of those sins as the animal was, and, as somebody had to suffer for Jahvé's satisfaction, they selected the animal of least value. He might further tell you that he was sending the animal to Azazel—that is, to the devil who dwells in desolate places. For the sins in question, not belonging to human nature, were ascribed to a foreign influence or power. It would be blasphemy to ascribe them to Jahvé, therefore they had to ascribe them to Azazel. In other words, Azazel had been developed as God's scapegoat. It was necessary for the reputation of the deity that he should not be supposed the author of evil, the blaster and blighter of nature, the maker of deserts; consequently demons were invented to relieve him of accountability for the hard and bad part of nature. Our imaginary curser of the scapegoat might not convince us of the rationality of his proceeding, but he might discover to us that the source of the error lay beyond him, and in the necessity of every priesthood to formulate an artificial system of obligations which man cannot possibly fulfil, and which keep him the slave of a perpetual debt to his gods, a debt whose magnitude he can neither reduce nor conceive. The craft of the

priest, in building up his empire over the world, has been developed in conformity with the human nature he had to deal with. It is shown by ages of experience that man's wit, courage, self-reliance, and honour never forsake him until he feels himself brought into combat with invisible, supernatural powers against which his weapons are powerless. Then the average man sinks to abjectness. For this reason the systems that centre in sacred personages make so much of their encounters with demons or devils. This has been the case from Zoroaster and Moses contending with magicians, to Buddha and Jesus contending with Satans, and down to Luther throwing his inkstand at the devil. When a man can fearlessly encounter supernatural powers, that is accepted by the masses as the crowning proof of heroism. And the test is not essentially different whether the powers be of heaven or hell. So far as human courage goes, a god with his thunderbolt is as formidable as a devil with his pitchfork. Let but the average man feel that he is pursued by an invisible avenger, it matters not whether god or demon, he is in a panic; it is that panic which brings out all the mean, abject, merely self-preserving instincts of human nature. He loses his wits, too. In other words, it changes man to a frightened cur ready to fawn upon any hand in which his witless head may see protection. It was under the steady pressure of panic, under a supernatural terrorism, that mankind surrendered themselves to the fantastic notion that they were guilty before God of sins they never committed, hereditary sins, metaphysically inconceivable; and there followed the base device of getting rid of this sin by the suffering of another.

That idea has steadily become theological, and passes more and more out of the consciousness of civilised communities ; but the old disease is not out of the system, and whenever men grow timid it shows itself. Every movement for reform meets with opposition from the existing order it would change ; and every institution of the existing order is consecrated. The reformer is thus brought to confront not a mere policy, but the gods. These gods do not argue ; they oppose authority to reason. They are represented by powerful interests, and their priesthood care only for such interests as make for the gods. Thus we see that the solid bench of bishops is able to defeat the temporal lords, a majority of whom desire to remove Sabbatarian oppression, and an oppressive marriage-law. The Catholic gods of Ireland were able to defeat the constitutional demand of Protestants in Parliament, who by sixty-three majority passed the Affirmation Bill. Each of these reforms has been defeated by the gods.

This has been so long the experience of mankind that propitiation of the gods is the first rule of politics. The other day I asked a member of the Ministry whom I chanced to meet, whether in the new blasphemy law it might not be provided that the Government alone should institute the prosecution. He answered doubtfully, " These things are matters of arrangement between different interests." But what interest can desire to put a law in motion whether the Government desire it or not? Who are these that a nation must propitiate before it can take any forward step? The gods. They are the opposition that is never vanquished. And propitiation of them, being the rule of politics, is a popular

habit. And so confirmed is this habit that people who have liberated their intellects from all superstition do nevertheless conform with the general custom of offering sacrifices to the gods. These are necessarily human sacrifices. Unfortunately, it is impossible to conciliate gods such as those that sit on the bench of bishops, with bullocks ; they are well provided for in that way ; they require sacrifices of the interests of men, women, and children ; of human freedom and human happiness. And it is not as men, for they are good-hearted as others, that the high priests demand these sacrifices, but as vicars of the gods whose power on earth can be shown only in their ability to prevail against temporal and human interests.

Of course, if this supernatural power must be propitiated, it must ; but it ought to be done in the noble way. It has always been remarked of tribes that perform human sacrifices that everybody wants to sacrifice somebody else. No priest or prince was ever known to immolate himself. The result is that, in the course of time, each community generally fixes upon some small number, chosen like the Jewish scapegoat by lot, for sacrifice ; or, finally, upon one individual to suffer for the tribe. But in civilised communities, where human sacrifices are indirect, we find each propitiator of the gods sacrificing the interest of somebody else to save his own.

Every reform has its scapegoat. In the American anti-slavery movement, when the pleading of Garrison for the slave began to make an impression on the country, and was gradually represented in the Legislature, the man who proposed any measure adverse to slavery usually began by denouncing Garrison. Having given over the arch-agitator to

the fury of Azazel, the politician could then proceed to advance the same principles. The liberal thinkers of England did not defend Dr. Priestley when he was their scapegoat to the pious mob. In New England Theodore Parker was the Unitarian scapegoat; and now that in both Old and New England that sect has advanced to Parkerism, freer thinkers than Parker are sent into the wilderness. I wish I could say that the scapegoat custom ends there; but it does not. The revival of intolerance has brought out the ugly fact that Freethinkers themselves are not quite beyond giving up somebody as scapegoat to the conventional Azazel. There are plenty of Freethinkers in Parliament, but not one remonstrates against any slander or curse poured upon the outlawed member for Northampton.¹ The University College is the most godless college in the world; its professors are mainly Freethinkers; but with three exceptions they quietly give up two ladies, connected with the freethinking organisation, to the fury of the gods who deny them the educational advantages of that institution. The eminent Freethinkers of the country have, indeed, been somewhat moved by the exceptionally cruel treatment of scapegoats sent into the stony desert of Holloway Gaol, but not enough to demand their release in such tones as the Government would have to obey. And we often hear people who hold the same principles eager to disclaim all connection with these more radical assailants of popular errors.

Now such connection cannot be fairly disclaimed. It is not to be denied that every man has the right to disclaim methods he dislikes, sayings he disapproves,

¹ Charles Bradlaugh.

does not remove evils to lay them ideally upon a Czar or a Minister and heap curses on him. Individuals are very weak except in conjunction with a vast number of interests and forces pervading society; and reforms that spend their strength against one man, or found their hopes on another, can make but slow progress. It is the best instruction of Republicanism that it tends to do away with this superstition about giants and ogres, to teach the people that principles, not men, are the important things for political and social vigilance. To kill the fox found in the garden is of less importance than to stop the hole in the wall by which he entered; a wise farmer will rather spare the fox if his escape may point out the neglected hole. As little can the defects of a social or political system be effected by anathemas or adorations of individuals. Leaders should be studied as representatives of forces behind them which supply their power for good or evil; and it should be remembered that their power is proportioned to their impersonality.

I am more and more drawn towards the conclusion that the only radical reform is that which goes on in the home. It is the teaching and example there, the spirit prevailing there, which will surely prevail in the large world. If, in that nursery of characters, principles are raised to supremacy above persons, so will it presently be in all the world. If a parent desires that the child should be loyal to justice, he must himself be loyal to justice. If he demand blind obedience to his own will, irrespective of the wisdom or justice above parent and child alike, he must expect to have the child grow up servile to mere authority, incapable of loyalty to a principle. If the child be made a scapegoat, he will grow up to make

other scapegoats. The family scapegoat is not an unfamiliar figure, and a sorry one it is. The faults of the child are never original. They are partly inherited from ancestors whom it never saw—an inheritance which the orthodox call "the old Adam," and therein come nearer the truth than those who can see only self-will in such faults. But another source of such faults is parental. Many a parent unconsciously punishes in his child his own faults, which he can see very plainly as reflected in that small mirror. The parent must not suppose he or she can monopolise all the selfishness, tyranny, or bad temper in the house: whatever traits a child sees above it, those it will grow to as the manly and womanly thing. All the corrections and restraints in the world will not avail to make the little goat into a little lamb, though it may be made into a scapegoat of the family failings. If any happy transformation is to be effected, it will be by searching beyond the individual instance of a fault for that which it reflects—in its environment. To sweep away a snowdrift here or there while snow-clouds are still in the sky may be necessary, but it is not a radical reform like bringing on a moral summer to render snowdrifts impossible. In the home the parent is a providence that can, and must, order the weather; and that parental providence will make a grievous mistake which detaches particular unhappy effects from their causes. These effects must indeed be dealt with, but not as if they were the root of all evil. The real root may branch out too far and wide to be entirely eradicated; but it may be kept from bearing fruit, and may be steadily diminished by the culture of good growths around it with rival roots.

It is easier to notice defects than good qualities, especially in those for whom we feel responsibility. Childhood is the blossom of each human life, and the parent watches each petal of it—watches it anxiously, almost microscopically—noting each spot, parasite, defect, as if it were that blossom which is to last for ever and make the future career. That is natural, because the blossom is more important to the immediate comfort of the household. But, meanwhile, much more important than the blossom, its beauty or defects, are the seeds at its heart ; out of these are to be developed the great trunk and fruit of life ; and the wise parent will find the best offset to a child's defects in selecting the mental seeds that swell largest, providing rich loam for those, and trusting to their culture to outgrow the inherited defects, even the parent's own, and shrivel them up. This process of selection, going on in every home, and in every individual of it, would largely do away with the tendency to make too much of personal faults and defects, which often only makes them worse.

In conclusion, I must remind you that nature itself produces scapegoats, and it depends on human justice and intelligence to improve nature in this respect. A salient instance is the extent to which the female sex has been a natural scapegoat in all ages of the world. The legendary foundation of the Christian system, the disobedience of woman, is reflected in the mythology of many tribes, who attribute all evil to some Pandora opening the box of calamities. The male sex has not cared to go beyond the woman ; it is not orthodox to ask why Jahvé should have concentrated all evils in a pretty apple, and other gods done the same in a pretty box, and dangled these before Eve

and Pandora. Milton is hardly orthodox when he asks Jahvé why he created woman at all. But, judging by the results, one might say woman was in part created to be the scapegoat of mankind, nature itself having assigned her functions and qualities which in past ages involved weaknesses. In militant ages she could tempt man away from strife; she might be a burden on his free movement; she might soften his cruel rage against the foe. We are now, it may be hoped, on our way to a civilisation which shall turn all those alleged womanly weaknesses into strengths. But meanwhile there is a sense in which woman seems destined to remain the social scapegoat. In all sexual immorality, though man and woman are equally involved, it is on woman alone that the social retribution and ruin fall. She must bear the guilt and shame. It seems frightfully unjust; best men have so declared it; but it is the ruling of nature, and it is carried out by women themselves far more than by men. It is by the decree of that society where woman is supreme that the one offender may be pardoned, the other never. It is easy to denounce this, but the causes of it are complex, and they reach back to the very sources of civilisation. Nature itself has made that difference between the sexes which makes inheritance and succession in families depend more on female than male chastity, and involves other disparities for the present expressed in an injustice. But it does not follow that because nature has provided a scapegoat man shall avail himself of that provision. On the contrary, for this very reason, because man cannot possibly share the equal penalties, he is bound by every principle of honour to assume a double share of responsibility in his own eyes for the

protection of woman from dishonour. The scapegoat may bear the blows, but not the real guilt—which is, indeed, in man a kind of blood-guiltiness.

“I write unto you young men because you are strong.” Wherever the greater strength is, there should be the magnanimity, there the knightly honour which protects the weak even from their own weaknesses, nor will ever be the means of adding any to the innumerable hearts that wander famished in the social desert. Nor is the duty of the strong limited to a passive innocence. It is his chivalry to see whether there be not within his reach some contributing cause to evils suffered by the scapegoat; whether, for instance, the monopoly by one sex of the most lucrative professions and employments may not be driving multitudes of the other into the wilderness; or whether the political disfranchisement of one sex may not be a stigma and cause of degradation.¹ “I write unto you young men because you are strong”; not so desirous of giving you opinions as of summoning you to form your own, so that you may act upon them; being well assured that it is not of heartlessness, but of thoughtlessness, that so many young steps are traced in thorns that might be traced in roses.

¹ 1907. I now consider any genuine political enfranchisement of women impossible. With rare exceptions they must vote under some kind of coverture or virtual duress; we could not get the real heart and voice of the woman, but the echo of a father, husband, priest, or party-boss. The disfranchisement is a stigma only in very vulgar eyes; refined and thinking men would see the degradation in feminine participation in the sorry work of partisanship—from which, indeed, many gentlemen take refuge in self-disfranchisement.

UNSCIENTIFIC PUNISHMENTS

IN the ancient town of Chinon, in France, I went over the old church of St. Mexme, afterwards over the palatial castle, and the prison attached to it, with its dungeon and *oubliette*. The *oubliette* is a sort of bottomless pit into which certain prisoners were thrown, too deep for their cries to be heard, and there left to perish and be forgotten ; hence called *oubliette*, place of oblivion. Six successive monarchs of France occupied this magnificent palace, with their courtiers, lords and ladies, and utilised this prison for the people they feared or disliked. I was struck with the nice balance and adjustment between the palace and the prison. In the palace there were rooms for servants, for people of moderate importance, and more splendid apartments for exalted personages and favourites. In the prison there were rooms for keepers, guards, rooms for moderate offenders, dungeons for the worse, *oubliette* for the worst.

I was impressed by the feeling that I had seen it all portrayed somewhere, and then remembered that it was in St. Mexme Church, in a mural painting there. This is a large picture, covering the wall, representing Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell, with Christ in the centre, directing the division between sheep and goats. It is a picture of peculiar interest, because it was painted while Louis XI. sat on the throne, and his face appears in that of the judicial Jesus. The

saints in glory around him are also, in some cases, portraits of his favourites, male and female. Beneath his feet, on the right, some are in a murky purgatory; on the left, souls tortured by devils. The chief devil may correspond to Louis's cruel agent called Oliver le Diable, himself finally executed. Louis XI. was the most powerful monarch who ever reigned in that place; his court was the most splendid; he was the most cruel to his foes, the most indulgent to his friends; and also he was the most pious—so much so that he used to wear an image of the Virgin in his hat, and, in the intervals of his murders, worship it and pray her forgiveness.

This old mural picture in the church represented exactly the faith of this pious monarch. I have no doubt that he felt himself—and really was—faithfully representing over there in the castle this holy scheme of heaven, purgatory, and hell painted in the church. A paradise of banquets, balls, luxuries, for his favourites, a bottomless pit for his enemies, and purgatorial dungeons for offenders not against himself, but against the community. Feeling himself to be enacting on earth, in the present, what Christ would enact at the last day—taking his friends into a palace, casting others into prison and *oubliette*—Louis had no hesitation in having his face copied in that of Christ. It was a frank way of doing what the powers of the world have been all along doing virtually, and are doing to this day. Out of the gentle Jesus who bade men love their enemies, and who would not accept flatteries of “Lord, Lord” in place of real virtue, men have made an imperial Christ who tortures his enemies and takes into heaven those who flatter him with prayers and praises.

Gradually, in regions where monarchy has been limited and made impersonal, this imperial Christ has been changed a good deal practically. As the St. Mexme picture has faded, the Chinon palace and prison have become ruins. But, theoretically, this ancient Christian scheme survives. It is described in the Bible—in that scene of the Last Day, and the parting of sheep and goats to hell and heaven—it is spread through the world and read from Christian pulpits. To the mass of mankind the Bible is their book of theories, their only compendium of just things, and thus this old picture of Judgment Day has faded from our church walls only to be graven in the popular imagination. That is indeed an advantage, for imagination may adjust itself to civilisation. The hell and heaven are now more rational than those of old church walls. Nevertheless, the old theory of justice and of human nature prevails still ; the notion that good and evil are supernatural principles ; that mankind are divisible into the good and bad ; that punishment and reward are just retaliations for good and evil conduct. Punishment is the wages of sin ; reward the wages of righteousness. Such is still the theory, as derived from the Bible ; that is to say, from the writings of uncivilised and uneducated people who dwelt in dark ages.

That theory, I submit, is unscientific ; from root to fruit it is untrue, irrational, and unjust. Men are no more divisible into saints and sinners than all objects are divisible into white and black. Official rewards for good behaviour are already seen to be childish ; but retaliations for bad behaviour are equally irrational. Retaliation introduces the idea of merit and demerit, and that is what none can determine. If you were to

punish an offender only when he personally deserved it, then nearly every criminal would get off—if he had a fair trial. Witnesses would come to prove that he was born and brought up amid evil—that it was hereditary ; scientific men would examine his skull, and show that he could not have acted differently. Philosophical jurors, believing in necessitarianism, would divide the jury. Such must be the increasing result, as society becomes more educated, if the theory of merit and retaliation were logically carried out.

This notion of punishment adheres to the more rational sow-and-reap theory. It is a good sign ; for out of the law of reaping what men have sown may be developed a scientific scheme of punishments. But we must not be deceived by a fair phrase when beneath it lurks an old error. For instance, Carlyle imported the whole of his early Calvinism into such philosophical phraseology. Carlyle was well described as a Calvinist who had lost his creed—that is, he had transferred that antiquated Last Judgment from a faith about the future to a faith about the present world. He still divided men into saints and sinners—snow-white and jet-black—these to be worshipped, those to be hated and treated as wilful devils. For this reason he denounced furiously all attempts to alleviate the condition of prisoners, or to reform and improve them. And he apostrophises the criminals in this way : “ Mark it, my diabolic friends, I mean to lay leather on the backs of you, collars round the necks of you, and will teach you after the example of the gods that this world is *not* your inheritance, or glad to see you in it. What has a Governor much to do with you? You, I consider, he will sweep pretty rapidly into some Norfolk Island, into some special

convict colony, or remote domestic Moorland, into some stone-walled silent system, under hard drill-sergeants, just as Rhadamanthus, and inflexible as he, and there leave you to reap what you have sown."

Carlyle speaks of these men as diabolic, and his rule over them would be as that of Rhadamanthus. But both Rhadamanthus and diabolos are myths; and the reason they are myths is that they have been found not to represent the realities of nature. But before they were discovered not to exist they became represented in a moral code, and, consequently, in laws. Carlyle once expressed sorrow that he could no longer believe in a Devil; and certainly he came as near it as he could. He held on to the spiritual substance. He believed apparently that every bad man was impelled by an evil motive, an evil will, a love of evil for its own sake. Such a being would be a devil, so far as his force could go, and, of course, would have to be treated as such.

But nothing is easier than to show that this is grievous error. It was Calvin and Cromwell speaking through Carlyle's surviving childhood, not his developed intellect. In no case has a crime been proved without a motive growing out of the same root as all the good works around us. The criminal is hungry, and wants food; cold, and wants clothing; poor, and wants money; he has senses, and desires their satisfaction. Sometimes, indeed, some of the noblest aspirations of humanity are represented by crimes. The excellent chaplain of Clerkenwell Prison told me of a little girl who set fire to a room in an asylum in which she was kindly treated. She seemed to be so simple and affectionate that a visitor, a lady, had some curiosity to discover why she committed

the offence ; and it turned out that once, when a fire had occurred in a former asylum, the child had discovered and been the means of stopping it. She had then been praised ; but she had never been praised or noticed again ; and she thought if there could only be another fire she might be praised again. So she got one up in order to be first to raise the alarm and be praised once more.

But take the criminal at his worst, his motives are natural—just those legitimate needs and desires that impel all the world. The criminal is one who tries to obtain such satisfaction by other means than work : it may be he has not the energy to work ; therefore he wishes to appropriate the fruits of others' toil. He pursues the satisfaction of his desires over the rights, properties, or life of other people. The fault is not in his motive, but his method. But the law has followed the reason of mankind as it has been freed from theologic notions of a devil, the inconceivable being who loves evil for itself. If, in our courts, you bring home the crime to a man, yet prove that he could have had no motive whatever to commit the crime, you prove him insane. The law assumes, indeed, that there was some motive where crime has been committed ; but if you prove there could be none, the man is shut up in a lunatic asylum. If a man, surrounded by everything he could naturally desire, were to meet another whom he never saw before, and from whose death he could derive no positive advantage, and kill him, it would be ascribed to homicidal mania. The law no longer punishes people for preternatural offences—such as witchcraft, sorcery, familiarity with Satan—except where they can be shown to be impostures, masking robbery.



There must be a humanly appreciable motive. Modern law, in recognising this, separates itself from ancient law by an abyss. That is, it leaves out of consideration the interests of God and the instigation of a devil; it regards the criminal as a man like others. Punishment presupposes that similarity. It supposes the criminal to be a man with the natural desires of a man, with love of his freedom and his life. Therefore, freedom is taken from him in order to supply a motive to him or others like him for abandoning crime. If it be found that he is not influenced by the motives common to humanity—that he does not desire freedom or life—then the law stops punishment and begins prevention; it cages and tries to cure him, so as to prevent mischief.

What, then, is the rational object of punishment? It is to supply human nature with stronger motives for pursuing its objects legally than it can have for pursuing them illegally. Finding human nature impelled by need and desire for subsistence and happiness, just Law recognises that need and desire as universal and legitimate, therefore to be protected for each by the combination of all; then, whoso would seek those legitimate objects by snatching them from others, seeks them in illegitimate ways. And just Law punishes such method for the purpose of adding, to the motives of natural desire, a further motive to conform them with the like motives in others.

This, I submit, is the science of law and of punishment. To be scientific all punishment must be primarily deterrent; secondarily, educational. And these two aims must limit and qualify each other. A scientific penalty would adequately supply

motives to just conduct stronger than the motives to unjust conduct ; and these stronger motives must be of a character to illustrate the reason of the law and nature of the offence. That is the element of truth in the much-perverted sow-and-reap idea of punishment. The harvest of pain ought to illustrate the kind of evil that was sown. That is nature's method. If a man misuses fire, he is burnt ; he is not frozen : the penalty illustrates the special folly it punishes. The punishments of nature are often rude and unjust, but they are always educational.

I need hardly remind you again that our popular theories of such things are derived from a theology at once unnatural and unscientific. Most of us have been brought up to worship a ruler of the universe whose dealings with mankind are so unjust that they have to be explained by the assumption that his ways are not as our ways, but high above our common-sense notions as the heavens are above the earth. A man and a woman eat an apple, and the whole human race is sentenced to eternal burnings. It might have been educational at least if we had all been sentenced to eat nothing but apples through all eternity ; but what has brimstone to do with it ? I might quote many examples of the chaos which theology has made into a code by accepting the letter of the Bible as the basis of Law. But the fundamental evil is the belief thus introduced and maintained that vengeance is a legitimate part of punishment. That is purely unscientific. Under whatever name vengeance survives—retribution, retaliation, or however formulated—it is an outbreak of the very spirit which law is to repress ; it is an instruction in the brutality it professes to punish ; and it fails even of its own low aim.

Retaliation is indeed natural ; so is a weed ; but, like the weed, retaliation is hostile to every good growth. " An eye for an eye"—that is the barbarian's justice, about on a par with the ugly images of his superstition. A brutal fellow knocks out the heaven-sweeping eye of an astronomer, and it is all squared by putting out the ruffian's bloodshot ball called an eye ! The absurdity of that primitive equation is universally seen. Yet the same principle survives in some laws called civilised. When a criminal stands before society who has injured the person of another—destroyed his eye, or his life—that criminal personally is hardly worth a moment's thought except so far as he may be made useful. If his eye could be substituted for that he destroyed, or his life for that he destroyed, that might be scientific justice ; that being impossible, the Law has simply to consider how that brute can be best utilised to remedy and restrain such crimes as he has committed. No sensible judge would care that the criminal himself should reap the evil he has sown, apart from the general benefit to be secured ; rather he would sow the criminal himself that society might reap some redress and advantage. Yet theology teaches us to worship a being who, in his infernal *oubliette*, actually preserves a vast realm of chaos and crime for the special purpose of eternally reeking his vengeance upon it. So he would make himself the arch-criminal of the whole set, moved by exactly the same brutality as that he punishes. Swedenborg rightly said that " punishment without a purpose is the punishment of a devil." How, then, are we to learn what punishments are scientific and which unscientific ? Entirely by experience. Legal punishment

Russia threw aside the knout England took it up. We have restored the lash for robbery with violence. Some have even proposed to restore the pillory, the treadmill, and other tortures. It was suggested that a treadmill turning in every prison might store up electricity, and so light the prisons. That would be an impressive instance of bringing into contact an unscientific punishment and the last result of physical science. People who propose such things think only of the false sentimentality with which some regard criminals ; what they forget is that these things have all been tried, and that they were abandoned by a process of evolution. They did not succeed in putting down or even steadily diminishing the crimes at which they were aimed. To think they will accomplish that now is to throw away experience. Consider that old punishment which has been revived—flogging. I have no sentimental feeling about it ; a prowling wolf who rends and tears his victim for gain ought to be exterminated from society, and if flogging him would do it he ought to be flogged. Some people wish to extend the lash to wife-beaters, and surely nobody need pity them. But what has flogging accomplished ? It was adopted to stop garrotting, and it has increased murder. The wolf now saves his hide by cultivating the serpent's cunning. He does not leave a living witness of his violence. He carries his fang in the shape of a revolver, and learns the art of pitching people into the Thames. Garrotting has swelled under the stupid "Cat" into murder. Robbery with violence has not decreased, but the violence has become more deadly. If the pillory is revived, the scandalous scenes which surrounded it will be revived also, and it will be

abolished as it was abolished before. The treadmill will not be more effectual in the nineteenth than it was in the sixteenth century. Those electric lights will suddenly go out. The lazy will prefer some other punishment, and when they get that it will be called torture ; and then you will find juries refusing to convict again. And so we should have our excursion into antiquity and reach the same point our ancestors did—all for not recognising the facts of human nature, as recorded in history, and that they can be dealt with successfully only when comprehended scientifically.

One further word about sentimentality. Carlyle and others have denounced it sufficiently, and it certainly does deserve some of their censure. People ought to keep their heads right as well as their hearts, and ought to see that the end of exterminating violence and dishonesty from society is great enough to require restraint of superficial emotions and sympathies. In reaction against the old cruel and useless penalties there arose a sentiment, part true part false, that society only needed to end crime by bestowing love and sympathy on the criminal. The truth of that is, that if society loved humanity enough to be a good shepherd to the poor and wretched—to bring them comfort, sympathy, education, and employment—they would not grow up to be criminals. Ignorance and want are parents of the criminal class, and if love and charity were wisely and freely bestowed in prevention, they would save the nation vast outlays for punishment of crime. But it is still true that it will be a good many generations before such a paradise as that appears on earth ; and equally true that to reach it will require a process of

purposed evolution by forcibly restraining the evil and preventing the propagation of their hereditary animalism. It took a good deal of breeding to change wolves into dogs and tigers into domestic cats; there was kindness in the process and education, but there were also wisdom and vigilance, and every untameable trait had to be killed off as every milder one was selected and fostered. Human sympathy for a criminal ought to be equal to the work of doing some good even to him individually, without forgetting that his evil part is a wild beast, only to be improved off the face of the earth. And yet, on the other hand, the advocates of ferocious punishments commit a greater error in forgetting that they foster and largely justify the sentiments they call sentimental, by confronting the wild beast with a wrath wild as his own. In other words, all ferocious punishments are unscientific because they come in collision with the sympathies fostered by the very society which requires defence. The same shrub that puts forth the thorn puts forth the rose too, and if the thorn becomes so excessive as to diminish the rose, it must expect the gardener's knife. Society is not a vendetta. Society does not exist to punish criminals. That is subordinate to its development, and must be kept so.

These considerations have a special bearing upon capital punishment. There is one thing about it that looks scientific. An executed murderer does not live to propagate his species. If capital punishment could do away with the violent, it would be in harmony with social science, and therefore both just and humane. But all experience shows that it does nothing of the kind. Under this law the majority of

murderers escape not only hanging, but any punishment at all. It is with difficulty that juries can be got to convict a man of murder, and with equal difficulty that the sentence is carried out. A far greater percentage of murders go unpunished than of minor crimes, the result being that the worst crime is the safest to commit. I have seen a sober estimate that there are a hundred murderers—known as such—going about in London now, in no danger whatever. Probably half of them would be now undergoing punishment were there any other for them than death. If this be even near the fact, it proves capital punishment to be an unscientific penalty.

Not long ago a case occurred which should not be forgotten, for it made manifest in a salient way the fatal faults of punishment by death. A medical man poisoned his brother-in-law to get his money, under circumstances of peculiar baseness, meanness, and cold-blooded villainy. The community was depressed at the thought that such a crime could be committed by anyone—especially a man of education—and would have been relieved if the black stain on human nature could have been cleared away. The judges three times postponed the trial for that purpose, but the crime was brought home with absolute certainty; yet, when everybody knew he had poisoned the poor deformed youth, the cleverness of the murderer, and the care with which the law hedges the criminal, together made a technical conviction difficult. Two chemists had to poison themselves, and suffer pain for several hours, not without danger, to track that venomous creature to his hole. Then, after he was convicted, the Anti-capital-punishment Society tried to get him off. Next, because he was an American

clergyman's son, the American clergy took it up; two English bishops petitioned for his life, the American Church moved that Government, and it was almost made an international matter. That failing, several thousand pounds were collected to make out a case of insanity; affidavits poured in that for years he had a craze about administering aconitine—albeit the only person that ever suffered was one whose death would bring him fifteen hundred pounds. All this to save the life of a viper! His execution was twice postponed, and it was as much as could be done to bring to the gallows as vile, as unquestionable a murderer as ever darkened the calendar of crime. If so much can be done for such a man, what do you think would be done for one of equal position who should be a little more dexterous? who should manage to leave some doubt upon one link, or two links, in the chain of evidence? A clever villain, meditating murder, reading that case, might gather courage. His probabilities of escape are about ten to one, either by non-discovery, or non-conviction, or clemency.

It may be alleged that juries will not convict, or murderers are pardoned, because people have such maudlin sentimentalities or superstitions about death; and that our efforts ought to be to do away with such silliness. But sentimentality is far less a factor in the result than the notorious difficulty of proving beyond a doubt a crime usually sly and secret. It would be a tragical day for mankind were the sentiment lost which surrounds human life with sanctity, and which demands a certainty almost absolute before inflicting an irreversible punishment. And, in addition to this, it is largely this failure of the death-penalty to diminish murder which keeps alive

the sentimentality. If under this punishment there had been a steady decrease of violence and murder, people would have adjusted their sentiment to it. That has always been the case. A young surgeon suffers keenly when applying his knife to human beings—delicate women and children—but because he knows he is bringing them health, saving their lives, his sensibilities cease. But if the amputations only went on bringing pain, without saving life, the sensibilities would increase, and surgery be abolished. People can make up their minds and feelings to witness any suffering if they are certain it is doing good. The failure of Capital Punishment to make any impression on the statistics of the worst of crimes is so notorious that there is reason to suspect that the sentimentality is on the other side. It is difficult to believe that a practical people would persist with a punishment abolished for every crime but one, proved unscientific by long and uniform failure, were it not written in the Bible, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." That is the sentimentality. In the middle of the last century there were 196 offences punishable with death. One after the other these penalties have disappeared, and with them some of the crimes so punished. Nobody now wishes to restore the death-penalty in those cases. Why does the country cling to the one case out of 196 that has been left? It is difficult to say, unless it be because of the sentimental superstition which invests the code of a wandering Eastern tribe which, having no portable prisons, had to slay the hostile members of their flock. I have never read an argument for this punishment more serious than Alphonse Karr's witticism : "Let us abolish the death-penalty,

but let Messieurs, the assassins, commence"—which is immoral as flippant. It puts the law on a level with the assassins. We are to punish the assassin by imitating him! He is to be our lawgiver! our model! For an execution is only murder, unless it can be shown to really protect society. Carlyle rightly declares that simple hatred—revenge pure and unmixed—is the only consistent ground on which to hang a man. "Other ground," he says, "on which to deliberately slay a disarmed fellow man I can see none." He declares he can see no calculable good effect of it upon society. Then I for one reject it; and that not because of reluctance to take a criminal's life for a real advantage to the world he wrongs, but because I believe that the greater advantage is to be gained otherwise. I believe that it would cool the brutal passions of men if there were more certainty of punishment. No murderer ought ever to escape, nor would he, if arrested, were there no danger of placing suspected innocence beyond redress. If the sentence were not so irrevocable, there would be less over-anxious doubt among jurors, and less sympathy in the community. It required a month to convict the murderer of Garfield; further months to hang him; but it would not have required one hour to send him into the Rocky Mountains to turn stony tracts into good soil for the habitations of man. Increase of the subtle arts of murder means increase in the difficulties of detection. The foolish free trade in pistols—every one bought with an eye to possible murder—the popularised knowledge concerning poisons and deadly agents, should remind us that crime is availing itself of the resources of science. How is law meeting it? With the methods of science? With the method of Moses!

JACOB'S LADDER

THERE is some solar and astrological significance about the figure of Jacob ; but in this as in most other cases the chief importance of a myth is the human nature with which it is informed. A novelist might write a story of the romantic passion of a right-angle for an hypotheneuse : if he invested those forms with the characteristics of human nature, the story might be translated into another language, the mathematical names being disguised, and the work might be as seriously interesting as it was elsewhere amusing. In mythology many names that seem human are really names for phenomena of external nature. But they have been translated from one language to another, from one period to another ; they have become invested with human meanings ; and these meanings are just as real as if the names were those of individuals. It makes no difference whether Jacob was originally the sun or the moon ; he was an anthropomorphic personification through ages enough to gather to himself many human experiences. The legends attached to him lived in the hearts of many wanderers ; his visions hovered above poets ; we shall see in him far more than one individual, if we look carefully. We shall see the facts of our own hearts and lives. "The rose speaks all languages." So does a fable that has flowered out of the heart of man. How far has gone this story of Jacob ? To what

various ages and hearts has it appealed? As beautiful a hymn as was ever written is a spiritualisation of "Wrestling Jacob," by Charles Wesley.

A hymn written by Sarah Flower Adams for South Place Chapel on the legend of Jacob's ladder, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," has been sung round the world by people of every faith. A rationalist gave mankind that "song in the night," which has soothed millions in their sorrow, for what head has not been pillowed on some stony grief? While America was singing it at the grave of Garfield, fellow-mourners sang it at their funeral service in London. I listened, and beyond the choir saw a lonely wandering Jew taking his hard pillow and setting it up as his rude dolmen in the wilderness.

Jacob was a second son, and his mother's favourite. By her instigation and device he tricked his brother out of his advantages of primogeniture. That is one of the basenesses evoked in the human breast by base laws. The injustice of parents, their partiality, breeds evil in their children—arrogance in the favourite, hatred in the others—and the law of primogeniture embodies that class of evils. Jacob had been guilty of a trick, but he had only replied to an injustice. Why should he have less than Esau? The Law would not allow equality, and so it became a competition of wits, in which Jacob won. However, he is disgraced: he has to fly from his wronged and angry brother. And it is when he is out in the wilderness that he has his vision of the Ladder. He is alone in the vast solitude. At nightfall the weary youth places a stone under his head for a pillow and falls asleep. Here he has a dream of paradise—but it is not a far-off paradise. To his young eyes heaven

seems close. It only needs a ladder to reach it. And the angels—they are natural angels, solid flesh and blood. They have no wings that bear them through the air. Perhaps those ancient writers knew that to have wings and arms too—wings being feathered arms—was a physiological monstrosity. At any rate, their vision of angels was of beings that had arms and hands, and required support on the rounds of ladders in ascending and descending. Thus Jacob's Ladder was realistic and his angels realistic; built up of the actualities around him, related to the laws of nature, they meant things attainable in life.

Jacob was certain that he was near the gate of heaven, and he took his stone pillow and set it up to mark the spot. His heaven was to be brought back again to the old home of his fathers; to be the possessor of all those lands from which he was now a fugitive; and to found a great family. Thus Jacob's heaven was all within the domain of the world; it was a sort of upper storey of the world, while he lay in the cellar, into which for the moment the angels let down their ladder. Of course, according to what we have been taught, Jacob ought to have dreamed a more spiritual heaven; a heaven beyond the sky, not reached by any ladder resting on the earth, only by wings; and it ought not to have been a paradise of prosperity and happiness, but of eternal basking in the glory of God. But the wanderer's dream pictured for him a truer heaven, and a legitimate one; certainly the heaven more likely to call forth the powers of a man, to animate life, and to reflect a blessing on the world. Man must have a new heaven in order that he may have a new earth. The old heavens have faded away because they failed to renovate the earth.

They have dwarfed it: they have built grand cathedrals and palaces, but surrounded them with huts; crowned a few heads, canonised a few saints, but left the masses pauperised or grovelling. These ancient heavens, however, with their winged and singing spirits, do attest man's need of some high ideal and hope which shall be able to bring a glory around his existence, and steadily raise it. But to have that power it must be a vision of something that man can attain; something that summons his actual energies, because related to them.

Nevertheless, there was a defect in Jacob's vision of heaven. Soundly founded as it was, it did not include the whole of his nature. It opened before him large estates, an ancestral home, patriarchal position, and a large happy family; but it did not include the high virtues, the noble character, the affections and the wisdom, which alone can make a real success. And this he had to learn by sad experience. Jacob at length attains his vision. He has wealth and lands. But lo! it is only to find himself again a wanderer. Heaven has escaped him. One of the saddest figures ever portrayed is rich Jacob once more wandering in the wilderness. He is the victim of his own miserable successes. He has tricked his uncle Laban out of his fair share of the flocks; he had tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright; and he had become a rich man as to money; but he was poor in all that could really enrich life, and now longs to buy back a little love with his wealth. Moralists have been severe upon Jacob, and, in sooth, he is rather a pitiful figure. But he is the personification of all the evils of poverty. There may be some great natures which surmount the temptations of poverty, but as a general rule the

tuition of poverty is not good. It hurls people into the very thick of the struggle for existence ; life becomes a sharp, wearisome battle, and in it men act without thought, from mere motives of self-preservation, selfishly. And when the battle is over, if they have won competence and leisure, it is too often the case that they have to look back upon a series of small stratagems and meannesses and wrongs to others, which they would like to get rid of at some cost. That is not always easy. Jacob has made his brother his enemy. He was in the wrong. He comes to look upon his brother's anger as the anger of his real God. That is a beautiful touch in this story. His traditional God, Jahvé, had approved of all his tricks, and promised him all blessings ; but Jacob was not contented with that. Experience had brought him face to face with a deity not traditional—with an awful eye in his own heart. He needed his brother's forgiveness before he could have his own, and when he received that he said to Esau : " I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."

Twice, then, Jacob had experiences in the wilderness. Once, when in youth, he had dreamed of a paradise of prosperity so near that it only required a ladder to reach it. Again when, having got to what seemed the top of that ladder, he found that paradise was not there, but had been left behind in the duties he had not performed, the magnanimity he had not shown, the affections he had changed to enmity, the good name and friendship he had lost. He learned that he had climbed the wrong ladder ; that this one only reached wealth, while the other was a ladder whose rungs were the successive stages and conditions

of honest and faithful life—each requiring to be gained before man can ascend to any happiness or fulfil the high dreams of his youth. Taught by severe experience, having repaired as well as he could the wrong done to his brother, Jacob began his climbing over again. But his first error had lamed him. He never got over it, but halted on his thigh; yet it was better for him to enter on a nobler life lame than to have continued his old career. And so we may now leave him.

For I wish to say something both of the world-wide and of the individual conditions represented in this fable of one who really was rather a nation than a man. It was a Semitic tribe that thus wandered in wildernesses, and with stones for pillows dreamed of heavenly ladders and a paradise to be brought down upon the earth. And there never was a nation that had not its wildernesses to pass through, and oft-times to pillow its head upon stones. This great English people is even now on its way to conciliate the Irish Esau, outlawed and wronged in the far past by a Saxon Jacob; it is wrestling with phantoms, and lamed by obstructions. Such humiliation followed a dream of heaven which left out humanity and justice. A Puritan dictator sought the blessings of his Judaic deity by massacre of Irish Catholic Canaanites. His successors have fallen from that rotten ladder; and, though the stone beneath be hard, it is real, and may yet be set up as a pillar.

And now comes the pessimist to tell us that the affairs of the world can go only from bad to worse; tells us there is no end to our wilderness, and we must contemplate as the only relief resting beneath our stone, not raising it up. But we will try at any rate to close our eyes for a little, and dream our

dream, which is as philosophical as doubling our trouble by raising it into an everlasting principle. Perhaps we may see some ladder rising from the thorny earth, opening up through the darkness, with angels that ascend and descend—bear upward our powers, and visit us with fresh hopes and courages.

If we look for an actual stairway firm-set on the earth, for real forces ascending and descending, not impossible winged spectres of traditional heavens, and for a paradise to be built of the possibilities and materials around us, then I say that never was seer vouchsafed more splendid vision than that which shines round us to-day. What a ladder of inventions rises for our civilisation ! What an angel is steam ! On the hundredth birthday of the man who built the first railway, Sir William Thomson announced an application of force which may gladden the wilderness of the world as happily as the engine which started from Stockton to Darlington fifty-eight years ago. A small box, one cubit foot, travels quietly from Paris to Glasgow, carrying in it one million foot pounds of electric force. This imprisoned Jove with his meek thunderbolts was asked by a medical professor to help him in a painful business ; he was sent eighteen pounds of lightning, which he took away to a patient's house. There lay a child with a tumour on his tongue. No doubt the mother had vainly prayed to deified elements for his relief ; now as descending angels they came and gently removed the tumour in one moment. And this vast force, tamed by man to perform a delicate operation on a child's tongue, stands equally prepared to move the machinery of Great Britain, and to change night into day. When George Stephenson, a pit-boy, rose up from his

pillow of stone, toiled on after his dream till he gained his triumph—his little engine drawing a train—it was to him the gate of heaven : as the train moved he cried, " It moves by light." The ages of light garnered in coalfields, yoked with the light of human thought, have drawn civilisation on to resources of power unconceived in ancient visions of heaven.

Yet man may have around him a new heaven and a new earth, and still dwell on some small desert of dogma or custom, not at all climbing with his world to a stature of corresponding grandeur. There are happy hearts that, passing the Valley of Baca, can make it a well ; but what shall we say of those that, amid the splendours of our age, find only a Valley of Gehenna? That man loses a magnificent birthright who cannot keep his heart and brain still at the top above any and all material achievements around him—and make these the mere environment of that more real paradise they cannot secure.

The only paradise of man is happiness. A thousand heavens could do no more than make people happy. The happiness is attained by the satisfaction of all human aspirations—all the hungers and thirsts of body, heart, and mind. The rounds of the ladder are all the definite conditions of external nature, corresponding to the definite powers of human nature, by fulfilling which man arrives at the goal of happiness. And the angels that assist him in this ascent are the angels of art, science, taste, culture, and human love. They are distributed in forms born of the past and of the present ; some are descending, having fulfilled their office, and deliver up their tasks to the newer forms that ascend. But they all work together to make life richer, purer, happier ; to do

away with its rudeness and crudeness, and so adorn and refine every part of life that it may be utilised, and minister to happiness without danger of causing injury to any. All the resources for this paradise on earth exist, and they will be enjoyed by mankind so soon as it gives up seeking heavens of tradition—that bliss of ghosts, not ideal but idle, upon which the chief energies of the world are wasted, though few would enjoy it if attained. When man turns from this, and concentrates every power on realisation of an exalted and diffused happiness on earth, he will begin to know that religion means not martyrdom, but joy.

The world at large will not do that. Humanity must yet wrestle with its phantasms of superstition, must prevail against its false gods and be free of their yoke, must turn from its conceit of passing from a life of ignorance and selfishness to a heaven of wisdom and virtue by the merits of another than itself—all this must precede that universal effort for realities which shall imparadise man. But, though the human race can only travel slowly to this end, the individual need not postpone his heaven. The civility of the world has sufficiently advanced to bring near the resources of civilisation to every wise and earnest heart. Each may find fit environment and a circle of related minds. Such it must seek, for no happiness can be found in isolation. Though happiness must be found in ourself, it cannot be found there selfishly. There must be co-operation and combination of means and efforts to secure the ends of beauty and harmony. And, since every human being is in some sort a child of humanity, each owes a filial and loving service to humanity. He cannot attain happiness if that

service be not rendered, and continually rendered. If he is to build an individual heaven for himself, the man must build it in such a way that all mankind shall be helped and furthered by it. A poet wrote of his hero :—

In all he did
Some figure of the golden age was hid.

Thus guarded from the delusion of seeking a selfish heaven, we may fearlessly assume that every individual is entitled to climb by his ladder to his genuine heaven. And for every human being there are angels which help him or her in this ascent. They are the actual forces of his religion. For it is of the essence of religion to animate man to redress the evils and make up for the defects of nature. It inspires him with a resolution to select from external nature those things that harmonise with his highest standard of what is best, the true happiness ; to combine and organise these into some kind of moral order which shall represent the moral being that is in him. This will lead him to emancipate himself from the spurious system called "religion," which would not build him up, but destroy him. The deities proffered him by conventionalism are such as would extirpate his virtue by persuading him to depend upon the imputed virtues of another, and to degrade his own manhood by teaching him to abase himself before deified power and self-will. A true religion will teach him self-reliance ; trust of the god in his own heart, culture of the providence residing in his own reason. He will learn that his heaven is to be attained by self-development, the exaltation of his own powers, the satisfaction of his own aspirations. These alone are strong enough to master the lower tendencies inherited from

his animal origin, and to create in him a passion for the ideals potential in his humanity.

Religion then, regarded as the spirit of self-improvement and self-development, will lead the mind it informs to look around it and see what angels are ready to assist it in attaining the fairer, happier world. Where superstition offers faith, religion offers enterprise. The angels descend and ascend ; they do not touch Jacob, nor raise his stone from a pillow to a pillar. That is left to his own enterprise. The angels go on with their tasks ; he must go on with his. No longer drugged with vain hopes, fairly awakened, the pilgrim of life will find his ladder near, and on it the angel that replies to his need—since only his need can behold it.

There is a beautiful angel called Art, able to surround life with idealising forms and colours, and introduce man into an enchanted islet which anticipates the perfection of the world. Before the mind has trained itself into a knowledge of the principles of picturesque beauty, and cultivated a susceptibility to poetic and artistic creations, it is apt to suppose that Art can only build around man a palace of illusions. But it is a realm of realities Art creates for us. It works on the emotions, and, if any feeling be awakened and excited, it matters not whether it is a material or a spiritual object. The effect is the same, the joy is the same. A sweet song that beguiles me away from my griefs ; a subtle strain of melody which weaves enchantment around me, and raises me into a sphere of purity and hope ; a poem which evokes all lovely remembrances, and surrounds me with visions of a fairer world ; a picture that fills my eyes with happy tears—why are these inferior to things that may be



touched and grasped, eaten or drunk? The material world can do no better for me than awaken just such emotions. And as this material world is as yet so undeveloped that it oftener causes sadness and pain, it is necessary for the heart to avail itself of this angel of Art to form around it a more beautiful and humanised world which shall excite emotions that enlarge and glorify existence.

Among the ascending angels none can bear us upward more potently than Love. To fall in love is a common phrase, and lightly used; but it is not a light thing to lose thought of self and attain a fuller, larger life in the being of another. It is part of the health of every nature that it has this tendency to find the joy of the earth beckoning it, not only in another nature, but in all ideals which pass beyond the narrow limits of self. In the young this happiness may begin with attachment of the affections to some person in whom the radiance of beauty and truth seems embodied. In the end this radiance is found extending itself to the entire sphere of existence. To Love's eye the landscape is more fair; the sunshine more bright; the flower more tender; nature is transformed. But this is only one stage in the progress of the pilgrim of Love. At length all who ever loved, all who have lived for others, become his companions: he understands them, they interpret the world for him. His eye meets love upon the cross; his heart beats in unison with the great and true, who in all time have lived, suffered, died for the sake of human hearts, impelled by an all-embracing world-wide love. And so with this angel called Love the heart ascends to a paradise where all are lovers, all unselfish, leaving behind the coldness and torpor of

that part of nature which cannot rise to this fine enchantment. The heart which has thus cast behind its selfishness will not only love, but will be beloved, and that is a heaven in itself. The entrance of a pure human love into the heart—the love of a friend, man or maid, wife, parent, child—is a great instruction in the nature and power of real forces. He who has been accepting as his God a being that somebody else loved, Abraham or Moses; who has been accepting traditions of the emotions that were felt by hearts long turned to dust; feeding himself on texts instead of at the fountain of all texts, may now say: If to actually know and feel this emotion which so pervades and thrills me inspires such hope that for it I will gladly labour all my life, what would it be if my religion were similarly real, and if all the usages and motives of my life were equally growing out of the deep desires of my own breast?

You shall have communion with the angel of Wisdom. It is the conversion of knowledge into the daily food of mind and character. There is a knowledge unrelated to life: the poet said to the botanist :—

Go thou to thy learnèd task,
I stay with the flowers of spring ;
Do thou of the ages ask
What to me the hours will bring.

The botanist, were he wise as well as learned, might reply to the poet that it was impossible to enjoy the flower in all fulness if its history be unknown, or to recognise the meaning of the hour apart from the ages that gave it birth. If a man seek the good, he will need a long life, and if he be wise he will secure a life as long as that of the human race. He will so identify himself with humanity that its history shall

be his history. By thought and study he will detach it from its poor accidents, unsheathe it, receive its flower thornless. If there were an individual now living who had come down from the time of Adam, he would have had many experiences, accumulated a great deal of knowledge, and become possessed of the wisdom fabled in blind Teiresias, who lived so long that he needed no eyes to see or foresee. But a man by wisdom travels over that long journey without suffering its pains and agonies. He will know that all the ages have climbed to set him near the top of the stairway where he stands to-day. He is not to do over again what has been done, but to take care that he obtains the bequest of what has been done. Identified with humanity, while free from its weary stages of savagery, barbarism, superstition, he sees the flint arrow in his steel knife, recognises every revolution in his own freedom, every battle in his own victory; every flower of his life is more rich and fragrant because it grows from a root spread through the world, fed by all ages; and because in its colours he sees the life-blood of brave hearts that lived and died to transmit it to him, transfigured in tints of heaven.

There is an ascending angel called Imagination. If man is to prolong his life through the past by knowledge converted to wisdom, he may equally prolong it into a future his outer form cannot reach, by Imagination. For Imagination identifies him with the truth of things, the most real tendency of things. In this it differs from Fancy. The human fancy is as a sport; it plays with the surface-meanings of things; its pleasant conceits float as pretty bubbles, beguile the moment, and burst.

Fancy may compare the flowers to stars, the stars to watching eyes. All very well, but not true. By Imagination the mind bodies forth the hidden sense of things, makes the invisible palpable ; by insight into the tendencies of to-day knows what to-morrow must bring forth ; amid whatever evils foresees the travail of the world, and is satisfied. I suppose that if Shakespeare were to reappear on earth he would see little to surprise him. The forms in which things had become shaped might delight him, but he would detect still at work the same human nature he so thoroughly knew, and gather full flowers from the seeds he saw, whose outcome he foreknew through his identification with every hope and vision of mankind.

These are some of the angels that pass and repass, descend and ascend, on the ladder which stretches up from the stoniest pillow on which a thinking head is laid.

There is an old tradition that Jacob's pillow of stone travelled to Ireland and Scotland, and is now the old stone in Westminster Abbey on which monarchs are crowned. But in a more real sense that stone is everywhere, ready to be raised by man into his throne. Above every lot in life, however hard, rises its ideal. Nor is it there to tantalise man with a dream not to be realised. It is there for him to climb by, from the stone of duty to the realm of beauty. And he begins to climb when he ceases to direct his energies to a heaven attainable only after death. There is no need to disparage that dream either. But he who postpones his possible heaven here would probably postpone it there too. Some have recognised a divine Love in the veil beyond the grave,

which warns man not to lose any joy of earth for a future heaven, whose lustre would be dimmed by every lost opportunity of life. Nor should the seasons of this life be sacrificed to each other. There is beauty in the blossoms of summer and in the snow-crystals ; in life's prose and poetry ; in youth and age. So saith wise Shakespeare :—

What is love ? 'tis not hereafter.

Present mirth hath present laughter.

And it is even so with all the angels that visit our daily life and nightly dreams. Do not suppose that they are to appear to you on their ladder at some future period, when you are better off, when you have time to search after them. Is your head resting on the stone ? Are you amid anxious cares ? Look up ! The ladder is there. The angels are there. Be stimulated to fresh effort to clasp their hands, that they may bear you up. Try and make the best of your hard lot. Think whether you may not relieve it by new resolution, by more cheerfulness, by greater enterprise, by not borrowing trouble ; by at least bringing to it all the love, amiability, sweetness, forbearance, study, and wisdom, which depend upon yourself, and of which no fate can deprive you.

OLD SPELLS AND NEW

A TRUE poet of our time, Dr. Gordon Hake, in his *New Symbols*, has written a wonderful poem called "The Snake-Charmer." In some far region the snake-charmer visited the haunt of serpents, and needed no protection but the music of his pipe: he knew the magic theme they loved; with it, in his deep eye, worked the spell more subtle than their subtlety, which brought them around him tame and harmless, changed from darts of death to lines of grace and beauty. But after a time the snake-charmer turns to other things, forgets the serpents, lays aside his flute, and lives the life of other men. When, however, age has begun to creep on him, he must again pass the haunt of serpents. He prepares again to work upon them with the old spell he knew so well. So now, where his youthful steps were so often bent, the mature man moves quietly, along margins of the morass, and presently pauses at a once familiar spot. He sounds the old summons; the serpents start forth, the reeds and rank grass are alive with them. He sounds the old theme—they approach; he fixes on them his eyes, more potent once than theirs in fascination. But his power has fled. The spell which once mastered them now only rouses their fury. The eye that once bound them has lost its magnetic beam. The serpents overwhelm the charmer they once obeyed. He returns no more.

Many meanings has this symbol of the snake-charmer! The writer has left it without moral or interpretation. But it is opalescent in its varied tints and shades of significance. There are few natures which may not gain from their own experience some interpretation of those serpents; their haunt is in certain perilous possibilities of every breast. The late Bayard Taylor told me that he was once walking in London with Thackeray, when they stopped at the studio of Baron Marochetti to see a group he had just sculptured. It represented a hero slaying a dragon. When they came out, Thackeray said to Taylor: "What's your dragon?" "My dragon?" "Yes," said Thackeray, "every man has his dragon. Mine is dining out; what is yours?" "The same," said Bayard Taylor; "but I have two—luxury and indolence." "That's curious," said Thackeray, "for they are precisely mine."¹ At that moment there were probably few men who had done more work, or at such cost of self-denial, than the two who so conversed, half-humorously, half-seriously; yet could they not speak of their serpents as things slain and quite dead. For these serpents symbolise what is imperishable. Their adornment is the beauty of the world without; their subtlety is in the quick eyes of our passional nature. "Things are the snake"—things as unconnected with laws, moral or other; things as sweet and sufficient in themselves. It is even in the old story. When the woman saw the tree good for food, pleasant to the eyes, desirable to make one wise, she ate the fruit thereof. No thought of any

¹ 1907. By a fallacy of memory this anecdote was given inexactly in the lecture. I am sure that the above is substantially what was said.

prohibition, nor of any consequences beyond her natural desires—food, beauty, knowledge. Perfect simplicity—reproduced in every child, not yet sophisticated by conscience, for whom no moral Cosmos has yet diminished the sweetness of a sugar-plum, the glory of a soap-bubble. When a child first makes the discovery that there is something higher than its wish, then its playmate Pleasure is transformed to a pretty little snake. Its decorations disguise danger. Enjoyments just now innocent presently have a tincture of guilt. Where the child wandered so carelessly in the fields, it is now a truant. The flowers it once plucked freely now turn to thefts in his hand. The stolen apples are still sweet, but each has at its core the worm of misgiving.

“The thoughts of a boy are long, long thoughts.” More than busy, practical parents think, do their little ones dream of high ideals, and more than they think are the sacrifices they make. The martyrdoms they undergo in giving up play and sunshine for the tasks of school, foregoing self-will for obedience, are often heroic. The temptations around them are alive with all the vitality of their nature. How do they prevail over them? By the aid of certain spells. Young and eager desires grow still under a parent’s approving smile. The mother’s kiss holds back the swelling tears of disappointment which might turn to wrath. As time moves on, the child listens to tales of holy children that grew in favour with God and man by goodness, kindness, study. It reads of beautiful infancies, as of Jesus, and of how he loved children. All these are as spells; and dreams of the heavenly kingdom, where children belong, are spells which bind strong passions in millions of little breasts.

But at length they grow up and enter into the world ; they share its conventionalities and pursue its interests, and the old spells become faint, or are forgotten. The habits so formed in early life may continue ; the deference and self-denial gained by spells of love, praise, and romance find many supports in self-interest and social usage, and may become a routine. But to many a life—perhaps to most lives—there arrive periods when passions grow strong and keen, and emergencies when temptations seem to become exaggerated. Interests, ambitions, desires, multiply with growth of powers to gratify them ; and, when they are hatched out of the nest of Self, they are brood of the lower nature. They are the serpents. Nor can they be exterminated ; that is a Christian fable ; they belong to the nature of things, as man belongs to the nature of things. They symbolise the perfection of the senses in recognising the things they like and in seeking them. The career of man would end if they ended. The great question is how they may be rendered harmless, docile, subordinate to the higher nature set over them in every breast, and humanised in its harmonies.

Not by the old spells that worked on them in infancy. The mother's kiss and smile are far away. Perhaps the grave hides them ; or they may be still more hidden by sinking back before the self-sustaining strength which has outgrown them. The self-reliant man or woman cannot remember the time when they lay helpless in those arms, or found their heaven in that smile. Or let them try to confront the temptations of full life, the passions of manhood, with those nursery tales about the little Jesus, and a rosy paradise : all the romance of early piety will be found

so conventionalised that it can no more stir and stimulate them. The snake-charmer's flute has got so dry, the tune is so faintly remembered, the snakes have grown so big, that the whole performance fails, and he is devoured by the passions which once lay still at his feet.

It is a very common belief that liberal thinkers are responsible for the extent to which the old spells which once tamed the passions of mankind have lost their power, and for breaking the chains of hope and fear that held selfishness and animalism in their place. But this is preposterous, in the literal sense of that word—which means placing *before* a thing what should come *after*. Thought is only an induction from facts ; it only formulates what it finds already in experience. When things are felt as chains they are no longer charms. Liberal thinkers are a product of the world : they appear at summons of a community which knows it is no longer bound by the ancient beliefs—whose prophecies have faded, whose gospels have become hollow catch-cries. When we turn to those most hostile to new ideas, most abusive of liberal thought, and verbally tenacious of the old spells, creeds, and litanies, we do not find with such evidence that they retain the old virtues and powers more than others. We do not find in them the patience and humility, the spirit of martyrdom, the scorn of wealth, the charities to which Jesus pointed as fruits of the holy tree, or which Paul found in the enthusiasm of love which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Could the prayers and creeds around us produce great souls, that would be the confutation of all scepticism ; that they cannot is a result of that far-gone scepticism in professed

believers themselves, who, no longer swayed in heart and life by the creed of their lips, angrily denounce those intellectually conscious of the universal condition. These are accused of causing the disease whose symptoms they recognise, and which they are trying to cure.

When an angry mob was clamouring around Jesus he told them he had a truth which would make them free. "What do you mean?" they cried; "we are not slaves." "Yes, you are," said Jesus. "They who do wrong are the slaves of wrong. You are not free; you are serving an evil mind." The mob was so mystified that they paused on the moment of attack. They cried out, "Abraham is our Father." Jesus could not recognise the family likeness. "If you were Abraham's children, you would act more like him. Did Abraham ever try and kill a man for speaking the truth?" Abraham, if he ever lived, may not have been so good and great as Jesus admitted, but the meaning is the same. The fatherhood of Abraham, which once meant love and truth, had come to mean the insurrection of hatred and falsehood. As Jesus suggested, while they were stoning him, if the devil were their father how could they act differently?

But we need not go so far into the past to learn the lesson of how the old spells dissolve, and leave men to be overwhelmed by the fatal powers they once controlled. We have in our own time phenomena that may well fill us with awe. A few years ago a great revival, as it was called, swept over the land. In every great city and town listening thousands sat still, or wept, as a fine voice sang, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Who that heard that pathetic hymn,

and witnessed the emotion of the throng, can ever forget the scene? The poor and wretched, the hard-featured and coarse, were touched by that voice and by that old cry. To some perhaps it sounded new, or boded something new—a Jesus veritably appearing. But for the masses, no doubt, there were awakened the memories which when they rise again are visions. All the poetry their mothers had to give them was the tale of one who, wherever he passed by, brought healing and solace; amid prosaic toil and moil of England, they had pictured him amid oriental scenery of enchanted lands; once more the sweetness and purity of childhood revived, once more hope fluttered in their miserable breasts; as the soaring theme reached every ear, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” But it was not alone the poor and coarse who listened to the hymn. The wealthy and titled, lords and ladies, statesmen, sat in high seats beside the revivalists. The most eminent personages in the Scotch cities especially joined in the prayer-meetings, and were enthusiastic at the hymns.

Well, it passed by. The thousands of converts were rolled up. And the whole thing was followed by a period of corruption in business, of reckless speculation, of bitterness at home and violence abroad, amid which the sentences of Jesus sound like solemn mockery. If, indeed, Jesus of Nazareth should pass by to-day, and see how his old gospel, or god’s spell of love to the neighbour, has become the cloak of fraud, how the successors of his apostles propose to propagate his gospel of peace by death-dealing guns—what would he think of the sentimental hymns about himself? Even the same that he said about those who still sang about Father Abraham,

while they clamoured for the blood of a man living the fidelity which Abraham symbolised. They might cry to every new prophet as he arose, "Tell us the old, old story"; tell us of Abraham and his friendship with God, and offer of his only-begotten son in sacrifice; and the prophets might often veil their new visions to rehearse the old themes. But here was one at last who would not repeat the ancient spell which he found powerless to deliver them from the deadly fangs of bigotry, cruelty, and baseness. Equally impotent is the same old story and spell, as told under other names. From many thousands of pulpits and choirs it is said and sung, but is unable to quell a single pain or kindle any hope of a better and fairer society.

The Mohammedans have a strong reverence for Jesus; it is nearly as strong as their horror of Trinitarian Christianity. They call him Isa, and place him above their own prophet in honour. They have many legends about him, among others this. Jesus was walking beside the Dead Sea, and picked up the skull of a man long dead. He was seized with a desire to know something of the man whose skull he held; and he said to it, "Resume life, and speak with me!" The skull obeyed. It told Isa (Jesus) that the skull he held was that of one whose soul was in hell. He said he had been in hell four thousand years; he was sent there because he worshipped idols. When he was first buried the earth crushed him—he sank lower and lower; devils scourged him; and during that four thousand years he had endured indescribable tortures. At this recital Isa wept, and asked the skull, "What dost thou now desire?" The head answered, "Oh that Allah would recall me to

life, that I might serve him with my whole heart, so as to be one day worthy of paradise." Then Isa said, "O Lord, thou knowest this man and me better than we know ourselves, and art omnipotent." Allah responded, "I had long ago resolved on what he desires; since, indeed, he had many excellencies, and was especially benevolent to the poor, he may return to the world through thy intercession, and, if he serve me henceforward faithfully, all his sins shall be forgiven." Jesus then said, "Be again a perfect man, through the omnipotence of God!" Then before him the man sprang into full and vigorous existence, and his first words were these: "I confess that there is but one God, and that Abraham was his friend; Moses saw him face to face, Jesus is his spirit and word, and Mohammed shall be his last and greatest messenger. I confess, moreover, that the resurrection is as certain as death, and that hell and paradise do really exist."

Mark what epochs are summed up in the brief confession of faith put into the mouth of that man. To the Moslem tradition four thousand years back would make him the type of the ancient world worshipping fire, planets, or other objects, and refusing the more moral faith associated with Abraham. They who would not try on their serpents the new spell when the old was worn out, were delivered up to them, and must go on sinking lower and lower under evils which their idols could never master. But how this typical idolater of forms defunct, who had come to the bitter end of them, and was given another chance—how he had to catch up with the mighty movements since his time! Abraham, rejected as too radical, had flourished and become the

name of an effete system ; it was now only necessary to say he was the friend of God. A new system had arisen, the Mosaic, which in turn had become a reaction. Moses need only to be mentioned ; his was no longer a name to conjure with. Then Isa or Jesus had come ; his force was not yet spent, more is made of him ; but the power is ebbing away from that too. So that tremendous thunder-music of Mohammed before which crumbled the idols of many ages—that too had to be heard and heeded. The same human nature which began by rejecting one new religion lived on to accept three as commonplace, and cling to the fourth with as obstinate a conservatism as it had denied the first. Such, indeed, is the last accent of this old legend. When the believer finds it necessary to affirm that his prophet is the last—the very last—messenger that man will ever receive from God, in that word he confesses that a later is already in sight. Men do not so defend a claim until it is in danger. So long as the spell is still on the world ; so long as it satisfies the heart, binds the evil, renovates the world, no one looks or listens for anything more potent beyond. When Allah says that he had been keeping a soul four thousand years in torment, although it had many excellencies and was especially kind to the poor, simply because it had not believed a certain creed, it is already confessed that the creed is in great need of support. That human excellence and that creed have long parted company. The benefit of humanity has been lost sight of in the mad struggle of the spell to survive its potency.

It is mainly from between the lines of old fables like these that we must gather the large and long experience of man in the ages, which casts the light

by which the present must be interpreted. From innumerable testimonies like this we learn that the systems of the past, on which hung in their time issues of moral life and death, turn successively to mere holy names; the actual evil and good they divided turn to fabulous hells and heavens; they lose their relation to an ever-shifting society and progressive life; they no longer command the hopes or fears of actual existence; they are exhausted spells or gospels which turn to fetishes and fairy-tales.

Sweet are old spells in memory. Amid all the wealth and grandeur which Churches have piled up as substitutes for their lost power, one may see that they are in pain for those purer virtues. They try to get back to the most primitive belief, the very first form and ritual, to find if some happy day may not hit upon the very charm. Prelates in lordly seats, clergy in fine parsonages, will still own that the best of their system is not here; it is far back there when the only cathedral was the hill-side or fish-boat. 'Tis said Aquinas was inspecting the treasures of a cathedral, and the sacristan said, "Master Aquinas, the Church can no longer say, Silver and gold have I none." "No," replied the Doctor, "and the Church can no longer say to man, Rise up and walk." I believe the priests would give up much of their Church's treasures could they regain that early power, that spiritual enthusiasm, which once uplifted prostrate humanity, and could they be made to this age its saviours from evil and the ever-looming despair. But never will they recover the potent spell back there. The dead past buries its dead; and its gladdest *gloria* has turned to a funeral hymn. That heart which would rise from the tomb of a

system long dead must rise by the same power that created, outgrew, and entombed that system. Once surrendered to the spirit of Life, it can import into itself all forms, all hearts, in which that spirit ever dwelt, and transmute them into living strength. And if the man of to-day had this single aim—himself to be, to live, to grow, and bear his fruit—he would find that he is heir to far more power than the holiest era or prophet in the past ever knew. The poor Moslem, confessing his saviours and forerunners, could only name Abraham, Moses, Isa, Mohammed ; but how many more epochs may be summed up in the soul of to-day ? What great hearts have arisen to smite off the fetters of Popes, to break sceptres of tyranny, sacramental superstitions, and purify the inner light, like the great hearts of the Quaker and Wesleyan movements. Many have been the divine dispensations of which we are heirs. But the true spell is possessed by none of them ; they have each and all been conventionalised. They achieved the work before them, but were then confined in it. From being the daily inspiration and devotion of their fathers, their sect is Sabbatised, settled down to comfortable contentment with things as they are. The spell they once used with such power is repeated verbally again and again, and all in vain ; its secret has passed onward with the human life expanded beyond them ; and there it awaits the coming men, the truer religion, the new enthusiasm which shall clothe this old world with justice, truth, and peace, as with the blossoms of a new spring.

THE EPIC OF THE WORM

THERE are fables transmitted from morning-lands of the world, of gentle doves that brooded over the wild forces of chaos, beneath whose soft potency arose the peaceful paradise, and bowers of beauty harmonious with the perfections of man and woman. There are fables of a sweet music vibrating over stocks and stones which made them beat with hearts in rhythmic measure, and group themselves to order and obedience; while wild beasts lost their fierceness, grew tame, and followed the leading of that lyre. These fables of the Foreworld are fulfilled by science which ever and again over the dark world says, "Let there be light," and there is light; which wins from the ferocities of nature their meaning; which classifies things chaotic to ignorance; which has caught and rehearses the music to which all forms keep step in the progression of man whom all other nature must follow.

Endless have been the variations of this ancient strain, and in our own time it has risen in a new song. The science of our time has sent its searching spirit after the smallest, lowliest objects, the mote floating in the sunbeam, the bit of dust, the zoophyte in the sea, the worm in the sand, and discovered at work in the least the power adored in the largest. The world is beginning to learn what humility is. Knowledge is its mother. Humility has long been preached.

Pious instructors have never been weary of impressing on mankind that they are made out of the dust ; that after such low origin they were degraded still lower under a divine curse ; that they are born in sin, and prone to evil. Yet when Science comes declaring man's descent from a highly organised animal, the preachers declare it a theory degrading to man. Degrading to an accursed creature of the dust ! There is a pride that apes humility, and is always having its fall. There is a true humility which ever exalts its possessors. There is also an abjectness that caricatures humility.

In a town where I once lived a pious old lady would never allow the caterpillars to be killed. "Our fellow-worms," she used to call them. She really believed what to others was cant, and her garden was a centre of devastation for those of her neighbours until it passed to the poet Longfellow. Really the caterpillars were not her fellow-worms, but her lords and masters. Human beings had their interests sacrificed to the worms. That is abjectness, which has all the effect of selfishness ; since few can mortify themselves without injuring others. The need of humanity is the moral standard of humanity. The poet Cowper wrote :—

I would not enter on my list of friends,
Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
The man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm ;

and at the same time he might, with equal rectitude, not respect one who would not exterminate any animal tribe whose existence were harmful to mankind or to the earth. But where Ignorance says falsely, "They are our fellow-worms," Knowledge may say the same truly—how truly anyone may find

by perusal of Darwin's wonderful book on Earth-worms, a work which may be regarded as a grander monument than the ancient Abbey that holds his dust.

The universal power of the worm has never been unrecognised by man. It was of old the symbol of Destruction. In Egypt it was expanded into Apophis—destroyer—and Worm became the name of fell dragons. Dante applies the name Worm to Lucifer, and Milton applies it to Satan. It passes from Job who said to the worm, "Thou art my mother," to the Christian who pictured Gehenna where the worm dieth not. The Rabbins brought together the worm and Solomon—the least and the greatest: they represented the worm gnawing the end of the wisest man's staff whereon he leaned, after death; the genii building the temple still supposing him alive and watching them, till the worm laid him low. The Christian tradition represented Herod as slain by worms. As destroyer of greatness it arose to mystical importance in the poetry of Victor Hugo. In the poem which gives my title, "The Epic of the Worm," Victor Hugo makes the worm a symbol of all-devouring Time, under whose soft remorseless might the ancient gods, as well as men, and even their worlds, turn to dust.

God having made me worm, I make you—smoke.
 Tho' safe your nameless essence from my stroke,
 Yet do I gnaw no less
 Love in the heart, stars in the livid space—
 God jealous—making vacant thus your place—
 And steal your witnesses.

Since the star flames, man would be wrong to teach
 That the grave's worm cannot such glory reach;
 Naught real is, save me.

THE EPIC OF THE WORM

Within the blue as 'neath the marble slab I lie,
 I bite at once the star within the sky
 The apple on the tree.
 To gnaw yon star is not more tough to me
 Than hanging grapes on vines of Sicily ;
 I clip the rays that fall ;
 Eternity yields not to splendours brave.
 Fly, ant, all creatures die, and nought can save
 The constellations all.

That has been the Epic of the Worm in the Past—
 the perpetual passing away of the glory of the world
 under the steady remorseless gnawing of time.

But in this our century poetry became pantheistic ;
 its eye caught a glimpse of cosmic unity ; it beheld
 the worm and the universe bound in one great law,
 ringed round with the circle of love, whose centre is
 everywhere, whose circumference nowhere. The first
 brave note of this kind is found, where we might
 expect it, in Shelley, who says :—

The spirit of the worm within the sod
 In love and worship blends itself with God.

Reverence for mere omnipotence had faded out of
 Shelley's heart : where he saw love, there he saw the
 one God he adored. Browning, for these lines, raised
 him above all poets for perception "of Power and
 Love in the Absolute, and of Beauty and Good in the
 Concrete." That thought became a pillar of fire to
 Browning's own pilgrimage, and the lines were
 virtually repeated by him in a sacred poem.

In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And, probing their immensities,
 I found God there, His visible power ;
 Yet felt in my heart, and all its sense
 Of that power, an equal evidence
 That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.
 For the loving worm within its sod
 Were diviner than a loveless god
 Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

But before him, the far-seeing vision of Emerson had with a worm measured the justice of the universe.

Fear not then, thou child infirm,
There's no god dare wrong a worm.

Thus there have been some fine preludes to the new Epic of the Worm, but this new Epic is not yet written. The materials of it, however, are gathered and sifted, and the spirit of it is born. There had to be a battle before there could be an *Iliad*, and the actual history of the Worm had to precede its Epic.

In simple prose Mr. Darwin has told the facts of the Worm. Nothing imaginative enters into it. He is unconscious of what to others is picturesque—namely, the greatest scientist of his century spending years in patient study of the humblest form of life. Because the worm is a nocturnal animal he must often watch beside it all the night. While the world slumbers the man of science watches: one, it may be, in his tower, with telescope fixed on starry galaxies; but the last watches of this great man were beside a pot of earthworms. And no astronomer searching the heavens ever found there grander vistas than this questioner of the earliest worker in the earth and primal creator of the sod. For what he sees there is something more wonderful than any inanimate star. He sees the dawn of organisation; the genesis of order; the beginnings of purpose; the first footprint on this planet of the brain that distinguishes and selects.

Preceding the advent of the worm into nature there is a long, long history. There is reached at length a great ball of rock floating in space; there are rains that play upon it, frosts that freeze it, sunbeams that thaw and crack it, and glaciers that split and scratch

it; and thus for æons pulverisation of it goes on. Amid this primitive dust, mixed into ooze, germs of vegetal life exist, and little by little their passive organisations grow till they can combine; and at length are produced forms not passive, which can transform the whole earth from conditions of inorganic to those of organic existence. In the sea the little coral animal absorbs floating atoms, secretes his house, bequeaths that to this submarine community; and so rise the reefs as islands emerged from the sea. The earthworm advances; he inherits but one little improvement over the living forms preceding it—sensitiveness. Like inorganic nature, he is blind; he is deaf; but he has sensitiveness of touch. He can feel the light, though without eyes. He can suffer. It may not be that the worm we tread upon in corporal sufferance feels as much as when a giant dies; but at any rate, with the worm, suffering enters the earth, and suffering means a knowledge of good and evil. So early was the fruit of that tree eaten.

To seek pleasure and escape pain became the law of animate nature. It began with the worm so far as it can be traced in any results. That which we call civilisation is but a system of contrivances to avoid pain and secure happiness. The worm is very low down when we look at it retrospectively: taking for our point of view the brain of Darwin, how very low seems the brain of the worm! But if we go farther, back to a bit of stone, and look prospectively, what a marvel will appear that living, feeling, moving thing, able to swallow the stone and turn it into a mill to grind its food out of dust and separate what is not food to make its house!

The earthworm is apparently the first form in nature

which ever earned its own living by work, and, like every faithful worker, serves all things while serving itself. It is very weak and very timid. No eyes or ears ; no feet, or means of swift movement ; no teeth has it. It can lay hold of a thing only by suction—exhausting the air from its surface. And this slow-moving, sensitive little thing, without shell or shield, without even a tooth, without power to harm any enemy, this weakest of forms sets to work on the huge granite world.

And it has worked upon it through boundless time with such effect that it has surrounded it with a mould of soft earth ; has ploughed and reploughed the fields it formed—enabled it to put forth its green carpet, to evolve higher forms ; then cultured it beyond these forms to yet higher ; burying races that became pavement for better.

The vast service done by the worm in preparing the earth to be the home and store house of man, as proved by Darwin, has naturally attracted the attention of theology. From the facts a writer has drawn a very ingenious argument for the theory of design in nature—providential design. It is rather picturesque to find theology repairing for help to that man of science it used to anathematise. We can remember when no curses were too loud and deep to hurl upon the man who had restored to England such lustre as it had not known since Newton. The experience of only twenty-two years since Darwin published his *Origin of Species* brings theology to seek from him some aid. The writer to whom I refer argued that the wondrous work of these earthworms must have been providentially designed because the worm does not do the best for itself while doing its

best for man. Such is the fact. The worm swallows vast quantities of sand, clay, chalk, and casts it as the rich mould or soil of agriculture. It does this mainly to extract the very small quantity of nutriment mixed with the dust it swallows. And it keeps on doing this for ages upon ages, though it might get a hundredfold more nutriment out of the vegetation by which it is surrounded. So, says the theologian, it must have been bound to its work in anticipation of man, and kept to it by a higher power for man's sake. But the analogies of nature point to a different explanation. The earthworm began its work upon the hard earth when and where there was less vegetation. Slow-moving and weak, it could only seek vegetables against many rivals, which destroyed it and drove it into the earth as a condition of existence. So its organisation was completed in adaptation to that. And it has not varied from that simply because that had become its instinct. Many animals go on doing a thing long after it has ceased to be of any advantage to them because at some time in the history of their species it was an advantage. Originally adopted for use, it continues by instinct—or, as we see in the case of man, by habit. There are human tribes that obstinately go naked though clothes are offered them, and others that keep the Sabbath rigidly after it has become an impediment. So far the earthworms are, after all, our fellow-worms. And to say that its adherence to the old plan now benefits man only shows that man has been evolved in relation to those conditions. It does not prove that man might not have been better off if the earthworm had varied from its old ways. Man is prone to project into nature the order he mentally derived from nature, and to imagine

an invisible man at work there. And if this invisible man be not superstitiously personified, it is true enough. There has been, there is, an intelligence related to his own at work in nature. It worked in the distinguishing touch of the earthworm; in the prudence of one animal, the affection of another, the maternal instinct of many. Human society is pre-figured in the earthworms rolling themselves together into a ball to keep each other alive through the winter. That too is Providence. But when the human mind aspires to go beyond this recognition of its own tendencies distributed through nature, and to find these concentrated in an omnipotent Person, the Providence that seemed beautiful in the worm or in man ceases to be so. We should, in such case, expect the culture of the soil to have come without such pangs of nature. The needless agonies of one worm are enough to silence every theology. The poet Tennyson trusts—

That not a worm is cloven in vain,
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

That is a divine voice; that is a human heart filled with the pity that nature lacks. It cannot endure that even a worm should suffer merely for another's gain—merely to make a fruitful soil for man. An omnipotent man would not so have arranged nature; and when man is asked to worship an omnipotent power who did so arrange, his lips may do so, but not his heart.

Therefore, every religion, beginning with speculations about the Infinite and personifications of Omnipotence, steadily passes into doubt, and ends in adoration of a human type—Krishna, Buddha,

Herakles, Jesus—whose power may be limited, but whose love is illimitable. The apostles recognised Jesus as their elder brother who had passed into the heavens; and the only difference between them and us is that we know of other elder brothers also who have passed into the heavens—that is, who have superseded in human reverence the deified forces of blind nature. Things divine in a man would be inhuman in an omnipotent deity; and, to recover human love and reverence in an age of conscious social sentiment and purposed selection, the divine idea must lay aside its omnipotence and magnificence and become a man, or even a babe in helplessness before the fatal aspects of the universe.

No longer able to praise an Omnipotence for doing so much when it might have done more, religion is necessarily developed into a love of Love itself, without reference to power. Making no effort to scrutinise the supposed Power, it ceases to complain of it; and is left free to admire all those adaptations in nature which illustrate the evolution of mind, and rejoice in that providential wisdom, culminating in man, which can avail itself of all that its humbler forerunners achieved. The long labours of the worm are vain except where man is wise enough to utilise them. For how many ages did man hunt, and tramp, and fight, without ever reaping harvests from the soil the worms had created?

But there is another high service. Darwin shows how they have preserved ancient ruins, valuable monuments, the only records of earliest history and the materials of science. I was lately wandering with some men of science over a beautiful region of Wiltshire. There were workmen excavating an ancient

barrow and bringing forth its remains—the arrows and ashes of warriors. We trod the green sward over a British village, which had been safely kept from ancient times by the careful envelope of soft earth deposited by the earthworms. These remains have now come forth for the instruction of the world. Among those present was Sir John Lubbock,¹ who had long endeavoured to persuade legislators to give to ancient monuments the protection accorded by the worms. These relics are in the region of the famous Cranborne Hunt. The hunting seat of King John was there ; the region is full of hunting lodges. For centuries there were twenty thousand deer in the Cranborne Chase, and some of the first men of England did little or nothing but hunt there. Not a barrow was excavated, not a monument exhumed ; over historic spots, Roman roads, British villages, they hunted ; all the providential care of the worm was wasted on them.

All wasted, from immemorial antiquity down to a few years ago, when Cranborne Chase became the inheritance of a man of science.² Then the work of the Worm was realised ; then the monuments which but for it would have perished were summoned, and to-day are coming forth. The little providence of the Worm, adapting itself to its environment, is linked at last to the providence of Science, winning from that mould a harvest of knowledge.

There must be a radical difference between the old Epic of the Worm and the new. As we have seen, the weak worm has appeared in scriptures and poems as the agent of destruction—the little lord of the

¹ Now Lord Avebury.

² General Pitt Rivers.

grave magnified into the Dragon of Hades. But the worm is henceforth revealed as the Preserver. The earthworm harms not the living. It burrows in graves to bring back into activities of life the useful substance which superstition leads man to bury there. The worm is the resurrection and the life for forces which man would consign to eternal death. Things hard and useless for the physical life of nature—stones, monuments—it buries; but it is perpetually converting organic remains into mould, and bringing it to the surface of the earth, where it may feed the roots of plants, rise up in stems and flowers, and seeds; so that by it the dead may breathe again in fragrance or sing in the happy carols of birds.

Solomon sent man to school to the ant that he might learn industry. But he might equally well have bid him learn of that worm which gnawed the end of his staff; because he was dead though seeming alive—the Worm not to be cheated, whose task was to convert the dead Solomon into something useful. And the lesson we may learn of the worm is the greatness of all work done in simple obedience to the actual law and need of the organism. The work of the worm is organic. It works there in its lowly sod—an earthworm, not ambitious to be a heavenworm. Without haste or violence, without sting or tooth, its victories are those of reality, fidelity, which have eternity to work in. Perfect steadfastness to what it is organised to do enables this weak and slow thing to change the face of the earth. Ah, if men were only content to be equally real! If men and women only spake and did what to them is organic—belonging to the very structure of their bones! What is all this which people call their religion? What are these

dogmas about hells and devils, and atonements of blood, rites, and ceremonies? Are they organic? Do they come out of the heart? Out of the brain? Are they expressions of our common sense—knowledge, reason? Nay, they are decayed remains of dead brains—of ancient Egyptians, Jews, Church fathers, Protestant fathers. Worms have long ago turned the brains of these to mould; have passed every atom of those ancient worthies into the vital currents of the world. But swarms of men, their natural organs paralysed by superstition or custom, find the putrescent remnants of dead thoughts, and transmute them to nothing, make them grow nothing—nay, wear these spiritual skull-bones of dead tribes as ornaments and charms!

Go to the worm, proud man, consider his ways, and be wise!

But there is another aspect in which the earthworm is but a too faithful type of the superstitions of the world. Emerson's first book opens with these lines:—

A subtle chain of countless rings
The next unto the farthest brings;
The eye reads omens where it goes,
And speaks all languages the rose;
And, striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form.

That, however, suggests the saddest side of evolution. Though the worm may mount through all the spires of form, it may continue through all of them instincts which, useful in a worm, are deplorable in a man. One need only read *Æsop* to see how the slyness of one animal, the vanity of another, may survive in heaven-facing man. The worm seems especially the type of that adherence to old conditions from mere force of long custom which is a chief obstruction to

which can so interpret the experience it has undergone in that humble pre-existence as to evolve the worm out of man altogether. It is time that this should be, and that the dogma should die that makes man a worm ; also the dogma that makes his religion a meditation on the grave and its worm. Grateful as we may feel to this lowly, harmless, serviceable hero of the ages past, we may yet fairly conclude that we cannot imitate with safety the worm-conservatism along with the patience and perseverance of our tiny ancestor. To be useful as he we must be better. We also have a great stony mass, as of a plutonic planet, to triturate—a mass of hard selfishness, of ignorance, of impenetrable consecrated wrong. If this is to be rendered levigable, the grains of truth and beauty selected from it, the essence secured by transmutation into useful growths, then man must realise that this involves a human, not a vermicular, process. It is high time that man should enter fully on his progression also ; should mount through all the spires of thought and the aspirations of his spirit ; and that in the future shall build his moral mansion not beneath nor above the earth, but upon it.

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THE INCARNATION OF IDEAS

INCARNATION is the method of Nature. It is coeval and coextensive with organisation. The qualities, the principles, of the earth steadily sum themselves in types ; the fox is cunning organised, the serpent is subtlety, the peacock is pride organised. Wherever any one quality is found to serve a purpose of survival it draws all other powers of the organisation around it, until there is nothing contrary to itself. There is not a hair on a fox that is not cunning. Nature carries this method into her formation of primitive man, every tendency of a community gradually climbing to a brain and body. Force, intellect, beauty, dexterity, become characteristics of individuals, and leave their idealised expression in Herakles, Æsculapius, Aphrodite, Apollo, Hermes. This ancient process of nature has a vast expression in mythology. By a delusion of the pre-scientific world it was thought that gods were incarnate in men, but rather it was men who became incarnate in gods. In the Hindu mythology incarnation anticipates the modern principle of evolution. The Avatars, or births on earth, of their Saviour correspond with the development of life in the earth, from the fish-incarnation of Vishnu, and the tortoise, up to the dwarf, the hero, the sage. In the course of time this idea has become degraded in India. Perhaps missionaries may attribute to the hardness of the heathen heart the

contempt which Hindu scholars feel for Christian theology ; but really the salient dogma of Christianity, the incarnation, is the merest commonplace of that country ; it has long been abandoned to the vulgar. Lately there have been rumours of new light coming to us from the East. Some Hindu "adepts," or "Theosophists," considered that the West was sufficiently advanced to receive the secret of certain potent knowledge of theirs, and a Theosophical Society was founded in London to receive it. It turns out to be nothing but our old friend Spiritualism in a fez, with an Oriental complexion. So many Western mediums have been exposed that Spiritualism has had to disguise itself here as thought-reading and other humbugs ; but its notable expedient has been to go over to India and borrow its conjuring tricks, along with theosophical rubbish from Buddhist metaphysics. Some excellent persons have been deceived by the dark-complexioned Spiritualism, which really comes from America by way of India ; for the desire to know something about the occult future warps many a good brain. But if you will consider the absurdity of Hindus proposing to initiate England into the wonders of spirit manifestations, you may judge how it must appear to rational Indians for Englishmen to propose to initiate them into the mysteries of incarnation. The last of the many Hindu incarnations was already many centuries past before Jesus was born ; and the vulgarest village witch-story or ghost-story could not be more vulgar, Salvation Army doggerel not more vapid, to an English thinker, than, to a Hindu thinker, must be this Christian patchwork of his own threadbare superstitions.

However, we have the means of understanding this

idea of incarnation better than those Aryans from whom we derived it. We get our scriptures from Semites, but our main doctrines from Aryans. The Jews never conceived such ideas as incarnation, human depravity, or Trinity. These are old Hindu theories. But, however worthless as theories, since they were grafted on the Semitic stock, these doctrines have had a history which has traced them over with human meanings. With age, rough musical instruments become smooth in tone, touched with subtle effects; and so it is with formulas through which the human spirit tried to express its impression of the universe.

Not long ago I witnessed in London scenes and tableaux of *The Tale of Troy*. One impressive scene was the lamentation of women over the dead body of Hector. One after another, Hecuba his mother, Andromache his wife, Cassandra, and Helen, utter the burden of their grief over the fallen hero; as each pathetic voice ends its farewell, the chorus of Trojan women raised their refrain:—

The races of men are born and die as the leaves of the forest.

During all this time one face has been looking on unmoved, that of the marble Pallas Athene. In the opening scene the Trojan women had made offerings at this shrine of their guardian goddess. Unmoved now by their calamities as then by their offerings, this statue seemed a type of the cold, celestial deity. It might have been in presence of such an ideal of stony indifference to the breaking hearts of women, imaged in the form of woman, that the Hebrew poet described the Gentile idols: "They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not." It was not mere marble, that

smooth hard brow of Athene, but an image of that eternal Necessity represented in a pantheon of heartless divinities, masquerading as men and women. But fatal as they is the nature of man. When the Elders murmur at the approach of Helen, saying that she is the cause of the war and trouble, the aged Priam addresses her kindly, as his daughter, and says: "I blame not thee, but hold the gods to blame." And when Priam repairs to the Achæan fleet to beg the body of his son Hector, there he hears Achilles saying: "This is the lot the gods, themselves sorrowless, have spun for miserable men, that they should live in pain." This is the heart of Homer passing on the gods that sentence of death which the ages have executed.

This beautiful Greek performance at Cromwell House connected itself in my memory with the Passion Play at Oberammergau, as having the same kind of weird impressiveness. The more I have thought upon them, the more related have they appeared, as if illuminations of the first and last pages of a great human revelation. In the Passion Play also there was a mother broken-hearted like Hecuba; there, too, were women with lamentations; but there was no stony, unmoved goddess or god; of this scene the god was not "sorrowless," like Homer's gods—he was the chief sufferer. So had it ended. Such was the long pilgrimage of the human heart, from awe-struck worship of omnipotent gods unacquainted with grief, therefore without compassion, to a god forsaken by gods, a god crucified, a god not omnipotent, but weakest of all beings, able only to suffer and die for man. This tortured god was not an incarnation of any celestial deity; you will find no

prototype of him among solar forms of the Vedas, or in the rosy cloud-pavilions of Olympus. He was the far-off incarnation of an idea—that idea which was already born in Homer's solemn accusation of the sorrowless, pitiless gods. With the experience of ages that thought gathered meaning and power; more and more humanity despaired of help from gods that knew not suffering. Of what use was their omnipotence to man? Why waste breath in appealing for pity to omnipotent heartlessness? Steady was the reaction; steadily man turned from the worship of idle force to the worship of helpless sympathy, which found its expression in a powerless, dying god.

There was nothing miraculous in this gradual incarnation. I received the impression at Oberammergau that the actors themselves were incarnations. They seemed to have stepped from the conventional pictures on church walls. In that rocky region, where the struggle for existence is hard, the Passion Play, and the wooden images it sells off, support the inhabitants. For some centuries now there has been such a demand for Madonnas, Marys, Christs, Judases, and disciples, that it is a fortune to bear physical resemblance to any of those sacred forms as pictured in every church. There is thus always going on a natural selection of the Christ-like and the Judas-like and the Mary-like. They come out of the dreams and hopes of mothers as genuinely as Jesus himself came. They are the reincarnation of the sacred persons of Jerusalem for dramatic purposes, and probably the unique effect of their performance is attributable to that fact.

In the *Tale of Troy* at Cromwell House we saw the

incarnation of a very different set of ideas. The devotion of our universities to Greek learning, the giving of six days to classic poets and philosophers, where an hour or two are given to Christ, had gone to produce these gentlemen and ladies in Greek dress speaking the language of Homer. And we saw an incarnation of ideals of personal beauty worshipped here as ardently as ever in Greece. It has been thought that our word "Veneration" comes from Venus; and it is pretty certain that, under various names, that goddess was as much worshipped at Cromwell House as any Madonna at Oberammergau.

A people is always surrounded by incarnations of its real desires. These desires, without becoming ideas, blossom as ideals, and bear fruit in social and political life. It is a delusion to think that one can gather the inner organic life of a people from their words or ceremonial forms. Americans are apt to imagine that the communities of Europe passionately love their sovereigns personally because they say so on public occasions. They are puzzled to think how such paragons of perfection have managed to be born on the thrones of the old world, and admit that they cannot get presidents whom they can equally idolise. Those puzzled republicans do not understand how widely words may become detached from realities. In more unsophisticated countries it is supposed that Christian peoples really love and imitate Jesus; that his priests are apostles who endure, and give all their goods, and die daily for man. What we see around us is the apotheosis of worldliness marked over with Christian names which no more correspond to realities than our Blackfriars Station means a holy convent, or Paternoster Row means a prayerful procession.

That old incarnation of the helpless god, scourged and crucified, was not seen literally in Jerusalem ; there is no sign that any eye which rested upon Jesus ever saw in him other than a good man suffering. The idea of incarnation of gods was foreign to the Hebrew mind. The idea, born of reaction against passionless, pitiless nature-gods, was waiting like an unembodied spirit in Greece and Rome, and it embodied itself in Jesus because it could not get to a farther extreme from an Olympian god than the most miserable man of a despised race. As a man, Jesus was born in Judea ; as a god, he was born in Rome. But even then the idea only was born ; the incarnation was gradual ; it is visible only in the thousand years in which European humanity nailed itself to the cross—there nailed its senses, affections, reason ; there pierced its heart till every sod and stream was red with the blood that flowed from its side. That was the crude incarnation of the scourged, thorn-crowned, pierced, and dying deity, who was portrayed fainting, falling, knocked about, bound, spattered with blood, haggard, dead, on every roadside and church-wall in Europe.

In the Bhagavadgîtâ, composed more than three centuries before our era, there occurs the finest statement in literature concerning the idea of incarnation. Krishna, revealing himself to Arjuna as an incarnation of the supreme spiritual life in nature, addresses the inquirer in these words : " I have passed through many births, O Arjuna, and you also. I know them all ; but you, O terror of your foes, do not know them. Even though I am unborn and inexhaustible in my essence, even though I am lord of all beings, still I take up the control of my own nature, and am

born by means of my illusive power. Whensoever, O descendant of Bharata, piety languishes, and impiety is in the ascendant, I create myself. I am born age after age, for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, and the establishment of piety. Whoever truly knows thus my divine birth and work, casts off this body and is not born again. He comes to me, O Arjuna! Many from whom affection, fear, and wrath have departed, who are full of me, who depend on me, and who are purified by the penance of knowledge, have come into my essence. I serve men in the way in which they approach me. In every way, O son of Prithâ, men follow my path."

In this passage we find a full conception of the fact that the incarnation of the supreme religious life in one or another outward form—be it Krishna, be it Christ—is through the illusive power of that life. That manifestation of moral life which in any age rises to such a force of power as to be an enthusiasm, a religion, produces a leader who directs that force against the evil of that time, and into him mankind imaginatively project all that is best in themselves till he ultimately appears in the dimensions of a god. All that is required to carry a moral point in the world against its obstructions. But, the point once carried, that particular manifestation takes its place in history along with other manifestations that preceded it; its limitations become visible; the seeming god sinks to a man and returns to the dust; and gradually man learns that these divine men are births out of long-pressing human need, incarnations of phases in the evolution of humanity, but only footprints in the earth of the moral sentiment, the essential and

universal soul in nature. Neither Buddha nor Jesus exhausts goodness. Men who know the transient nature of the birth and work of an idea that is made flesh cast off its transient body, its casual symbolism, and rise to the essence, the inexhaustible spirit of truth and love, which appears again and again, from age to age, in new forms representing new needs, ever confronting the new obstructions, which often wear the guise of incarnations outgrown, dead in their garnished sepulchres.

A truthful apparition of Jesus to-day would say to his worshipper, in the words of Krishna: "I have passed through many births, and you also." Jesus arose as the incarnation of a moral insurrection against a tribal deity, whom he called the devil, and against his priesthood, whom he denounced as a generation of vipers—phrases not to be thought of as his personal expressions, but as the solemn creed of the Gnostic revolution. He underwent another birth in Rome as a victim of Roman tyranny, founded in a tyranny of temples. Then he appeared as the poorest, most maltreated, of men. He was born yet again as a young radical revolutionist, whom Church and State vainly united to slay, who was still alive and would soon return to humble the haughty and raise the poor to their throne. Finally, he was born as the king of kings, who would keep down the people and establish a Roman Empire over the world. Many births he thus went through, in the last to pull down what he built up in the first. But we can now look at him and the successive movements bearing his name as things behind and beneath us, the individual man incarnation of a liberal Semitic tendency, the mythical man incarnation of more

widespread human hopes, the imperial man incarnation of the political and social world which slew him as an individual. That completes the cycle of Christian incarnations. Properly they represent a closed chapter in the natural history of man. It is like the dawn of a shape in the eocene formation, its subsequent branching out in various modifications of later formations, its final fossilisation. If we observe the tendencies, hopes, aims, convictions, which animate the civilisation of to-day, we find them such as no Christian under any past manifestation of Jesus, could he reappear, would recognise as belonging to the Christianity in which he believed. What we see around us are the tendencies of a new age, represented in institutions, in advantages and premiums, which lead to the incarnation of these tendencies in powerful men. But we do not see tendencies leading towards great religious incarnations. The men who elicit that popular enthusiasm which once gathered about Buddha and Jesus are now great statesmen, authors, men of science. The abbeys of ancient faith must now enshrine these or enshrine none. There appeared some possibility earlier in this generation that the Church of England was about to bud once more and bear a new fruit. But the Broad Church withers day by day; its heralds die, but are not succeeded, and their prophecies are unfulfilled. It would seem that the secular intellect has so far advanced that no Broad Church engineer can bridge the ever-widening abyss between the island of theology and the continent of science. The young genius of the country is finding that island uninhabitable, and it is gradually abandoned to the sway of its fossils.

In these contemporary processes we see a sort of natural history, just as we recognise the same in the various developments of the Christian ages. Nothing is more natural than that men should go on fulfilling their desires and embodying their aims in representative men and institutions. But what we miss in this natural evolution is the presence of a conscious direction, a purposed evolution. It is that which made those points of fire in history which leave their sign in new stars lit up in the heavens, and birthdays on earth from which time is dated. The entrance of a new idea into the world is the sublimest of phenomena; the memorial of it never passes away; but it cannot be born of a tongue, it cannot enter by an essay: only when it has created a great soul, expressed itself in a brain, a heart, every drop of that heart's blood, told its story in a life, filled the air with its fragrance of beauty and poetry, only then does it become the sacred possession of mankind. It is that which appeared to man in the past a divine incarnation, that being his way of distinguishing it from the ordinary progression. And in fact it is natural evolution only in a transcendental sense. In it is the conscious reason, the art, the purpose of our humanity, laying hold of and controlling the ordinary forces of nature and human nature.

It is this kind of purposing principle working by, yet controlling, the normal agencies of evolution which I believe to be the essentially religious principle. It represents the divinity of man; his right and duty to stand in the earth as a god; to be its master and providence; to overrule the blind fates of inferior nature, and impose the predestinations of his own will. The incarnations of the past do not

embody the will of our own time, nor satisfy its need. They bring us only sad tidings of great sorrow, bidding us despair of our own world and look only to another, which is always becoming less visible even to the eye of faith. But they do instruct us, these past incarnations, as to the power of ideas to organise great brains and hearts, and so again thrones more powerful than the thrones of selfishness and wrong. We learn from them that when Peace, Justice, Liberty—now ideal—have become incarnate they will transform the earth, and make every society the image of their perfection.

You must not suppose that in using this ancient word "incarnation" I am bowing to the past or compromising with theology. I am using a conception common to all the more intelligent races, because it represents the palæontology, so to say, of moral evolution. You cannot understand an animal now living if you know nothing of the extinct forms corresponding to it. There is nothing unscientific in this matter. Incarnation is no mystery. There are incarnations in the earth, purposes of man which he has made flesh, though they are rarely respectable. There is the bull-dog, for instance. Nature never made a bull-dog. That brute in an incarnation of dogged human ferocity. Man has by purposed selection bred into it an exaltation of ferocity which is only ideal in himself. A brutal man's attack on the object of his hatred is limited by self-love. However ferocious he may be, if a pistol be aimed at him he will let go. But when a thoroughbred bull-dog has fastened on a foe you may wound him, torture him, kill him, and he will not let go. He will die holding his victim—a very martyr of self-sacrificing ferocity.

This horrible creation by man of an evil genius outside the self-preserving instincts which direct nature's evolutions may illustrate my meaning as to the higher incarnation. If there can be supernatural hatred, there can be supernatural love; if there may be self-sacrifice for the evil, there can be self-sacrifice for the good passion. The laws of nature which admit the incarnation of a genius of destruction, as in the first Napoleon, would not less admit the incarnation of Western religion in an English Jesus or an American Buddha. But there will not be an English or American avatar or incarnation so long as the East is sanctified and the West secularised. So long as the living race is taught that antiquity is sacred, and the present profane, it will be defrauded of messianic vision and potency. Life grows strong by hope, not by memory. If there be anything really religious in the heart and aspiration of our own time and country, then it is the only infidelity to turn back their stream of tendency, giving up our own institutions to the sway of selfishness, while our purest enthusiasm flows for a buried world—as,

Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns fathomless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

It is remarkable how plastic nature becomes under the breath of a new human tendency or ideal. Our own century and our Western world have again and again burgeoned out with noble thoughts and aims, with great hearts represented in great events, which shame our faithless groping amid cemeteries of dead ages. In Germany Spinoza broke up the small horizon of thought; Lessing uttered his prophecy of a nobler religion; Goethe gathered both in his brain;

a chorus of poets, philosophers, seers, sang like the morning stars to an awakened world, and a new intellectual world sprang into existence. In England, the song of Shelley descended on the slumbering world, as of the skylark turning the dawn to music; in Wordsworth, the voice of the turtle was heard in the land; in Carlyle, the lightnings played and purified the air; and there has followed them an age of thought, philosophy, poetry, and science, which has burnt up the creeds and dwarfed the Bibles of antiquity. Why need I tell you again how the new-born genius of America broke forth in the eloquence of Channing; thundered in the great heart of Parker; sang in the poetry of Longfellow; was incarnate in the genius of Emerson, who, while theologians disputed about miracles, wrought them, and left his country with four millions of negroes singing the songs of liberty, because fifty millions of whites are free from thralldom to the Past?

Seeing that we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, even in our own time and place, why should we heed the voice of despair, or repudiate the happy portents flaming in our own sky? Let us not imitate the retrospective infirmity of our fathers; let us not for a moment regard these great literary and moral movements of our age as having exhausted its genius or its purpose. Nay, the greatest men of our century are only forerunners: Goethe, Shelley, Comte, Carlyle, Emerson, Darwin—they are but forerunners, their works but sketches and studies of the work that shall be achieved when along their pioneer-paths the art and religion of the world shall march to build the new "City of God."

I have pointed you to the pillars of cloud and fire

which shine along the astonished sands of our imported desert of dogmas ; it is not difficult to recognise and admire them, even for those who fear to follow. But what is difficult, while it is perhaps more important, is to recognise the movement of the great heavy masses of men in the same direction. We have advanced to a period of the world when an idea without a people is as powerless as a general without an army. Where in the past it required many centuries to incarnate the idea, henceforth we must look to the quickened hearts of the million to realise it by their million eyes and hands. That is what liberty means, that is what popular education means ; that it shall no longer be the necessity of the poor to toil for distant generations alone, without themselves getting as much as the unmuzzled ox that treads out the grain. Cultivated thinkers are sometimes alarmed at the signs of intellectual and moral movement among the masses. Such signs are sometimes rude. The rebellion of a populace against ancient errors is apt to show itself in ridicule that seems irreverent when not in a scorn that is bitter and biting. But, in truth, the fountain of tears is close to the fountain of laughter. There is nothing more healthy in the radicalism and scepticism of the people than their humour and laughter. Those are the signs of a growing perception of the ideals in whose light idols become grotesque. Robert Browning closes his great religious poem, "Christmas Eve," with these striking lines :—

I have done !—And if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the Holy and the awful,

I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to Thee, instead of him ;
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When the frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !

But that is not the only thing proved by this rising laughter against the antiquated dogmas demanding to be taken seriously. As the sanctity long ascribed to those ancient dogmas was all taken out of to-day and its common sense, the sanctity of which they are now being deprived is all entering into the life and work of to-day. The toiling man of to-day, who stands in a world needing reform, is claimed by two masters. He cannot serve both ; nay, as they are antagonistic masters, to hold by one means to despise the other. So Jesus found among his friends. To find God in to-day means to find Mammon in the god that dreads the light of to-day, and degrades its task. You need not be disturbed about the ridicule, caricature, blasphemy, which break out as the common people wake up to the preternatural imposture to which their interests are sacrificed. When the water is muddy it only shows the bottom has been reached and stirred. That freedom from superstition which hitherto was whispered in the ear, discussed between scholars after the servants had left the room, written in Latin, or in costly volumes, is now proclaimed from the housetops. The masses hear it ; they give their opinion in strong Saxon speech ; it impresses their sense of humour like some feverish dream whose fearfulness the morning turns to grotesquerie. If we get through the new Reformation without cannon-balls, it will be because words as real are allowed free

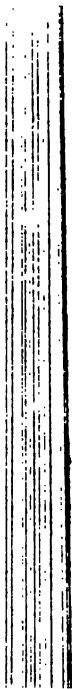
course, and the arrow of ridicule not answered by the poisoned fang of oppression.

Whatever may be the incidents, pleasant or unpleasant, of a moral and intellectual revolution does not affect the essence and end of it. The incarnation of the leading idea of any age must be in the features of that age; the manifestation of a truth to a people must be through their own speech and garb, inner and outer. Mohammed said to his Arabs: "Had you been angels, Allah would have sent you an angel. He has sent me. I am one of you." You need not therefore expect to find the progressive incarnation of the real, but as yet latent and unconscious, religion of England expressed in philosophical formulas, or even in revised and corrected theories. It will put on that which is deepest in the heart—liberty, justice, love of fair play, truthfulness—and for the first time these abstractions will flush with life, will become real, and men will know the meaning of principles now vague and verbal. How little do the supremely ignorant classes—that is, the upper classes—so well educated in the moral and intellectual life of Jerusalem, Greece, and Rome, ignorant of the life of the masses around them—how little do they realise that the Churches they support are huge bribes to hypocrisy in the pulpit, injustice in the law, and mediocrity in literature! How little do the great middle classes realise the evil done to their sons and daughters by the persistent clerical training of them in the belief that an assent, in which the reason can bear no part, to formulas of prehistoric metaphysics, faith in Jewish folklore and Christian fairy-tales, are more important than personal character or meritorious works! This fearful infidelity to fact, this practical

atheism, is not, as some fondly deem, an abstraction, a mere wandering ghost among us ; it is incarnate in powerful Churches and priesthoods ; it is able to make good its principle by saying to Servility, " Come, thou blessed of our bishops, inherit the good things of this world " ; to Freedom, " Depart, thou accursed, into contempt and poverty, into prison." And this incarnation of darkness will never be successfully confronted except by an incarnation of light which shall reveal the fact that every evil of our land has its source in this corruption of the moral and intellectual forces which alone can build the fairer world.

That which in the present phase of religious development appears to me the hopeful sign is the rebellion against worship of mere omnipotence. An omnipotence indifferent to the sorrows and evils of mankind can only be worshipped by fear or by satisfied and comfortable mediocrity. It is the worship of the strong by the strong, and is reflected in a heartless optimism distinctly unmoral. Against omnipotence, enshrined in earthly empire, religion has never failed to oppose its love incarnate in weakness. That is 'what the holy babes in their bulrushes, in their mangers, mean ; better the feebleness of a tender babe that cannot master the world's sorrow than a throned omnipotence that can and will not. Indra, Zeus, Jupiter, Jehovah, their almighty majesties all went down out of human faith before incarnations of love clothed in weakness, bound, crucified. And all that is lightly called atheism has now this moral and religious side. It is a misleading word, but it is a sign of the human heart refusing any longer to worship mere authority, mere power, either in heaven or earth. Religion steadily becomes what

it was of old, the worship of love in its manger, on its cross. That is the God incarnating himself in humanity. Shall we follow his star in the West? or will we take sides with the powerful God against the weak? This one small society standing for the unpopular religion amid all the magnificence of Christendom is our answer. We have withdrawn ourselves from the incarnations of error and wrong and all their glory; we have now steadily to incarnate in our own lives the spirit of truth and love in all its lowliness. Every individual who takes that living spirit into his brain and heart, more and more, day by day, till it organise his whole character and influence, is contributing something to form the force that shall be irresistible. Who can tell in which humble home of this land, in what Joseph's workshop, on what Mary's breast, is this day slumbering the holy babe, the possible prophet of a new religion? You may tell where he or she is not. The coming teacher is not in that home whose aims are the vulgar success, the mere desire to get on, where mean compromises with conventional error are inculcated, and every ideal as it rises is hid under a bushel of social servility. But he, or some forerunner and helper of his or hers, is in every home where truth and knowledge are consecrated like a shrine, where the human heart is held divine, and where the deity worshipped is pure rectitude—worshipped all the more when a babe in weakness confronting an omnipotence of wrong.



1. 2. 3.

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